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THE GERMAN EMPEROR WILLIAM II.

By

CHARLES LOWE, M.A.

AUTHOR OF

"PRINCE BISMARCK: AN HISTORICAL BIOGRAPHY;"
"BISMARCK'S TABLE-TALK;" "ALEXANDER III., OF RUSSIA;"
ETC., ETC.

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WILLIAM II., GERMAN EMPEROR

CHAPTER I.

YOUTH.

Birth—Ancestors—The Hohenzollerns—"Is it a fine boy?"—An ideal *Hausfrau*—Prince "Willy" and the wars—Early training—Gotz of the Iron Hand—Among the *lange Kerle*—Democratic education—At the Cassel Gymnasium—Dr. Hinzpeter—"Satisfactory"—A student of Bonn—Eventful times—Duelling—Family vicissitudes—Trip to England—Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein—Betrothal and marriage—"The jewel that sparkles at my side"—Setting up house—A dashing hussar—Martinet—Military student—Early *Wanderjahre*—A glutton for work—The pupil of Bismarck and Moltke—A French character-sketch and prophecy.

FREDERICK WILLIAM VICTOR ALBERT, the third Emperor of re-united Germany, was born at Berlin, January 27th, 1859. Had it been possible to consult his pleasure with respect to the precise date of his appearance in the world, it is pretty certain that so fervid an ancestor-worshipper as he was to prove would have signified his desire to be born three days earlier, so as thus to have the same birthday as Frederick the Great. Had he been born two days earlier, this would have occurred on the first anniversary of the marriage of his parents.

These were Frederick William, only son of the Prince Regent of Prussia, and the Princess Royal of England. Happy, on the whole, in the choice of his parents, he was still more fortunate in the selection of his remoter forbears. For these included two of the most capable and renowned monarchs—the Great Elector, and the Great King—who had ever sat upon a throne, and whose fame was to inspire the young Prince, of whom I am now writing, with a consuming ambition to emulate their glory, and keep the quality of the Hohenzollern line up to the level of its most shining representatives.

This line had been a very long and illustrious one, though sprung from comparatively small beginnings. The Black Eagle is the crest of the Prussian royal family, and the eyrie of this rapacious bird was a lofty, isolated crag among the wilds of Swabia, now crowned by the restored and picturesque Castle of Hohenzollern. This was the *Stammschloss*, or cradle, of the Hohenzollern race, from which one cadet member, Conrad by name, emerging about the middle of the twelfth century, and taking service with Kaiser Barbarossa, was appointed lieutenant, or viceroy, of that Emperor over the Free City of Franconian Nürnberg. This office became hereditary in his line, which continued to grow so much in substance and repute that, on the sovereignty of the Mark of Brandenburg—the “sandbox of the Holy Roman Empire”—lapsing to Kaiser Sigismund, the Hohenzollern Burggraf of Nürnberg managed to purchase it, electoral title and all, and thus, as Markgraf, or Warden of the Marches, in Brandenburg, gained a territorial foothold for his family. This it steadily went on increasing till, at the beginning

of the eighteenth century, it was able to dignify itself by the royal title, which has now in turn become merged in the broader and brighter blazon of an Emperor. The author of *Self-Help* has confined his beadroll of fame to the humbler heroes of worldly success. But by none of those heroes were the virtues of personal pluck and indomitable perseverance ever more shiningly and continuously displayed, than by the long line of rulers who converted a mere watch-tower at Nurnberg, first into an Electoral Schloss at Brandenburg, and then successively into a Royal and Imperial Palace at Berlin.

"A boy! God preserve mother and child!" was the message that was flashed to Windsor Castle from Berlin on the afternoon of the 27th January, 1859—just four weeks but a day after Louis Napoleon, at his New Year's reception in the Tuileries, had uttered to the Austrian Ambassador his famous words' of warning and—of war. "Is it a *fine* boy?" telegraphed back her anxious Majesty within the hour; and equal solicitude had been displayed as to the physical character of the royal baby by the crowds of Berliners who flocked to the palace of its parents, on hearing the cannon-thunder announcing its birth. "All's well, my children," sang out grim old Field-Marshal, or "Papa," Wrangel, who regarded all humanity, high and low, as so much mere cannon-fodder. "All's well," he cried, on emerging from the Crown Prince's Palace, whither he had hurried to inscribe his name in the visitors' book. "It is as strapping a recruit as one could ever wish for."

Yet no. For presently it turned out that the Prince had come into the world with a physical imperfection

which, in the case of a private person, would totally disqualify him for military service. The royal baby had some of the qualities of an infant Hercules; but, like Hercules, he had also one very grave defect. His left arm was as good as useless—a blemish due to no constitutional cause, but simply to the surgical accidents of his birth.

In due time little “Willy,” as he was called, grew in grace, and was christened at Babelsberg (his grandfather’s summer residence at Potsdam) with all becoming pomp. In September of the following year (1860), being then nineteen months old, he was taken to Coburg to make the acquaintance of his English grandmamma, who thus wrote of him in her Diary:—

“We” (mother and daughter) “remained together for some little time, and then our darling grandchild was brought. Such a little love! He came walking in at Mrs. Hobbs’s” (his nurse’s) “hand, in a little white dress, with black bows, and was so good. He is a fine, fat child, with a beautiful white, soft skin, very fine shoulders and limbs, and a very dear face, like Vicky and Fritz, and also Louise of Baden” (his aunt). “He has Fritz’s eyes, and Vicky’s mouth, and very fair, curly hair. We felt so happy to see him at last!”

At the same time the Prince Consort wrote to the Duchess of Kent: “Your great-grandson is a very pretty, clever child—a compound of both parents, just as it should be.” While still in long clothes—so the story ran—his father had shown the infant Prince to a deputation of Berlin citizens. One of these gentlemen took out his watch and began to dangle it before the eyes of the baby, who clutched the chronometer in his

tiny fist and held it fast. "Aha," says the Crown Prince, who was always fond of his little joke—"you see, gentlemen, that when a Hohenzollern once gets hold of a thing, he doesn't let go so readily again."

Nor did Prince William prove to be less of a true Hohenzollern because he was brought up in a manner so purely Anglo-Guelphish for the first fifteen years of his life. The Germans justly boast about the virtues of their ideal *Hausfrau*, but no German woman ever attained to a higher excellence in this respect than our own English Princess Royal, who proved a perfect model of a wife, a mother, and a house-manager. Above all things, she devoted the most incessant and scrupulous care to the proper up-bringing of her children. "The Crown Princess in the nursery," wrote Dr. Hinzpeter, the tutor of her sons, on the occasion of her silver-wedding, "soon came to be a frequent topic of talk with the Berliners, among whom there even circulated mythical stories of corporal punishment publicly administered to dirty-faced Princes. The grain of truth at the bottom of these stories was that the mother's love for her children was great, and equal to any effort to bring out everything that was good in them."

Prince "Willy's" childhood and boyhood fell in a time which cannot but have had a powerful effect on his imagination, and the formation of his character. For it was a time of wars and political strife. First there was the Italian campaign, which had resulted in the precautionary mobilisation of part of the Prussian army, with the Crown Prince at the head of a Division; and then came the bitter four years' "Conflict" between the

Crown and the Chamber with regard to the army (Bismarck now being in power), which had the effect, among other things, of estranging the King from his son. For the Crown Prince had strongly protested against the course on which his father had embarked, as endangering his own hopes of succession, and for some little time he was virtually banished from the Court.

The Crown Prince must have had some stirring stories of war to tell his boys when he returned home from witnessing the storming of the Redoubts of Düppel (April, 1864); and Prince "Willy" was doubtless standing at his nursery window when the hundred Danish guns, captured on that occasion, were soon thereafter dragged in triumph into Berlin by a laurel-wreathed contingent of the gallant pickel-haubéd stormers. He was eight years old when his father had once more to take to the war-path—against the Austrians, this time—tearing himself away from the sick-bed of his little son Sigismund, the news of whose death presently reached him on the tented field, making him the most miserable of conquerors. Truly, there was enough to work upon the feelings of the boy Prince William, and help to fashion his character, during all this period of weal and woe; and, finally, in his twelfth year he was presented with the wonderful panorama of the Franco-German war.

Replying to the congratulations of the Prussian Landtag on the birth of his first child, the Crown Prince had said: "If God preserves the life of my son, it will be my dearest task to educate him in the feelings and principles which bind me to the Fatherland." And at

Versailles, after the Proclamation of the Empire, he wrote in his Diary :

"Jan. 27.—This is William's thirteenth birthday. May he grow up to be an able, honest, and upright man, a true German, prepared to continue without prejudice what has now been begun. Heaven be praised, between him and us there is a simple, natural, and hearty relationship, which we shall strive to preserve, so that he may thus always look upon us as his best and truest friends. It is really a painful reflection when one realises what hopes have already been placed on the head of this child, and how great is our responsibility to the nation for his education, which family considerations, and questions of rank, and the whole Court life at Berlin, and other things, will tend to make so much more difficult."

In the education of Prince William the directing influence of his mother was always paramount, and this influence was exerted in favour of an up-bringing for her sons, as purely English as was compatible with their preparation for the career of German Princes. In particular, they had a great advantage over other German boys in the open-air sports and exercises which formed their relaxation while residing throughout the summer at the New Palace, Potsdam, with all its memories of Frederick the Great, who built this majestic pile as a supplement to the adjacent Sans Souci during the Seven Years' War.

In their games and exercises—cricket, croquet, rowing, &c.—the young Princes had playfellows selected for them from other than the exclusive circles of the Court and aristocracy; and when these outsiders chanced to be Anglo-Saxons, they were made all the more welcome by reason of their special capacity for out-door sports.

Prince William very soon learned to row, to swim, to skate, to ride, to fence, and to shoot—in all of which manly exercises he excelled, in spite of his being practically confined to the use of one arm—the right. But by constant use this arm had acquired the strength of two; and Lord Ampthill used to say that to shake hands with the Prince—which the latter always did in the most effusive manner, as a man does to his best friend whom he has not seen for fifty years—was like being in the grip of Gotz von Berlichingen, of the Iron Hand. But “the moral courage, the persistency, the sense of duty, and pluck which overcame the impediments to physical development were also constantly at work in other parts of his education”—to quote the testimony of his American playmate, Mr. Poultney Bigelow. “After an experience of teaching many hundreds of English boys of the same age,” wrote the Prince’s English tutor, “I do not hesitate to say that Prince William could write English as well, and knew as much of English history and English literature, as boys of fifteen at an ordinary English public school. Since then I have given many hundreds of lessons to many hundreds of boys. But a more promising pupil than Prince William, or more gentlemanly, frank, and natural boys than both Prince William and his younger brother, I can honestly say it has never been my lot to meet with.”

On completing his tenth year (1869), Prince William, in conformity with the custom of his house, had been ceremoniously enrolled in the army as second lieutenant in the 1st Foot Guards at Potsdam. In little more than a year later this regiment marched away to the war with

France, and its youngest officer was said to have burst into tears on finding from his father that he was not yet old enough to accompany it to the field. For his martial ardour had already been kindled by the sights and sounds among which he lived at Potsdam, the "cradle of the Prussian army"; and as the nurse of that army might be regarded the *Lehrbataillon*,* in the midst of which Prince William may be said to have grown up. To strut with drawn sword at the side of this Pattern Battalion, or on the flank of the leading company of the 1st Foot Guards, with their sugar-loaf headgear of the time of the Great Frederick, and move the mirth of the spectators by trying to keep step with the long and prancing parade-step of these *lange Kerle*, was the task which the boy Prince William was frequently taken from his schoolroom to perform, in order to remind him that, above all things, he was a Hohenzollern, and that bayonets had ever played a much more important part than books in the building up of his house.

At the same time, it must be said, books certainly formed a much more prominent element in the education of Prince William than they had ever done before with any member of his family. For the times were very different

* This Pattern Training Battalion is composed of picked men from all the regiments of the Prussian Army, who here imbibe those rules of unsurpassable discipline with which they shall in turn, as non-commissioned officers, leaven the whole mass of their stay-at-home comrades. The *Lehrbataillon* is one of the great shows at Potsdam; and to see it march past, and indulge in other machine-like exercises, when the Emperor has some illustrious guest at the New Palace, is a thing as much to be remembered as were the evolutions of Frederick William's Regiment of Giants.

from what they had been in the youth of Frederick the Great, and even of old King William. The grandson of this monarch had been born in the latter half of the nineteenth century, with all its general enlightenment and new political problems ; and a ruler required to be a very different stamp of man from what he had been a hundred years before. The great Frederick had boasted of being the "first servant of the State," but he was also its absolute master, and his terms of service were altogether his own — everything *for*, but nothing *through*, the people. The Prussian State had, in the meanwhile, become a constitutional monarchy of a model kind ; and its chief needed, above all things, to be in touch with the thoughts, the wants, and the aspirations of his people. It was the lack of this touch which had cost Frederick William IV. the half of his absolute power.

In view, therefore, of the altered circumstances of the time, the parents of Prince William determined to give him the benefit of a public school education, the better to prepare him for his future career. This was quite a new departure in the family history of the Hohenzollerns, and it gave a great shock to the Conservative old grandfather of the Prince, who must have feared that so democratic a step meant the beginning of the end to his glorious dynasty. But the Prince's parents remained firm, and all that the apprehensive grandfather could exact, by way of compromise, was that the Prince's schoolfellows in any particular class should not exceed a score. Otherwise he was to be treated on precisely the same footing as his fellows.

A public school, or Gymnasium, is a very different thing

in Germany from what it is in England. To begin with, it is more in the nature of a huge cramming establishment, and has none of the outdoor attractions which form so prominent a feature of Eton, Rugby, or Harrow. It is equally devoid of the social polish, refinement, and peculiar codes of personal relationship which characterise these scholastic communities. As education of all kinds in Germany is very cheap, a *Gymnasium*, or High School, is practically accessible to all, with the result that the pupils present as great varieties and extremes of social status as the democratic class-rooms of Aberdeen or St. Andrew's. As a rule, too, the training of the body at these *Gymnasias*—in spite of the name—is subordinated to that of the mind. After Prince William came to the throne, he himself indulged in some bitter lamentations on this head, saying that, when he studied at Cassel, no fewer than eighteen of his fellow-pupils, out of a class of twenty, wore spectacles, while two of these with their glasses on could not even see the length of the table.

It was, he said, cruel and inhuman to make boys work so much at their books, which left them little or no time for healthful recreation and the necessary training of the body. If he himself when at school had not had a special opportunity of riding out and in, and looking about him a little, he would never have got to know at all what the outside world was like. And so much had modern history been neglected in favour of useless classical lore, that the Great Elector was to him but a nebulous personage. As for the Seven Years' War, it lay outside the region of study altogether, and history ended with the French Revolution at the close of the last century. The Liberation Wars, however, which were extremely important for the young, were not included, and it was only, thank God! by means of supplementary and very

interesting lectures which he received from his private tutor, Dr. Hinzpeter, that he got to know anything at all about modern history.*

At Cassel, Prince William remained from his fifteenth to his eighteenth year (autumn, 1874, till January, 1877). At first he was lodged in the Fürstenhaus, the old residence of the Hanau Princes, opposite the Electoral Schloss; but when summer came, he removed to the airier château of Wilhelmshöhe, where he occupied a ground-floor suite of apartments at some distance from those which, four years previously, had been tenanted by the captive Emperor of the French.

He proved to be a diligent, but by no means a very brilliant pupil. The truth, perhaps, was that he had too many things to do to achieve a marked pre-eminence in any. His favourite study was history, and his favourite classic author Horace, several of whose odes he had voluntarily translated and learnt by heart. Thucydides, he once said to an examiner, he could not understand; but he was found to be well up—thanks to Dr. Hinzpeter—in German history and literature. Science seems to

* This Dr. Hinzpeter had been recommended to the Crown Princess by Mr. (afterwards Sir Robert) Morier, English *chargé d'affaires* at Darmstadt; and his Imperial pupil afterwards lauded him to the skies as possessing all the virtues of the typical Westphalian, being "solid, simple, clear-headed, honest-hearted, tough, sagacious, and true as steel." This was certainly a fine man to train the mind and form the character of his pupil; and Dr. Hinzpeter gradually acquired a personal influence over his princely charge, which was to make itself felt in a very marked political way after the Prince had come to the throne, reminding one of the ascendancy which M. Pobedonostseff, Procurator of the Holy Synod, similarly acquired over the mind of Alexander III, his former pupil.

have found but little favour in his eyes, though he had, of course, to join those half-holiday excursions in which all German schoolboys are made to indulge, with a botanical case at their back and a "knappin hammer" in their hands. I fancy, however, that Prince William found far more delight in waving about the silken banner which had been presented to the school by his mother, and of which he himself was appointed the bearer in the Sedan-day procession at Cassel. Friends among his fellow-pupils he does not appear to have made, though this was doubtless not due to any lack of advances on their part. Dr. Hinzpeter wrote of him :

"Wherever he was placed during the various phases of his development, he used to take part in the life and aspirations of the circle in which he moved, but he has never given himself entirely up to them, and always retained the independence of his feelings and of his judgment. This has occasioned many disappointments, and called forth many complaints of his being untrustworthy, ungrateful, and even heartless, but these complaints are as unjust as they are natural. The discomfort of a hen which has hatched a duck's egg, and afterwards sees the duckling in the water, is proverbial and natural, but complaints or reproaches as to the bad taste or the perverseness of the duckling's instinct would not meet with much sympathy. Even the old eagles themselves have no right to blame the young eagle who chooses the sphere for his soarings ; but that he should be taught by others is as undesirable as it is improbable."

As the Prince had had to undergo an examination before being admitted to the Gymnasium at Cassel, so he also had to submit to the same ordeal before leaving it ; and out of seventeen candidates for leave to pass on to a University he only came out tenth, with the certificate

“satisfactory.” On the other hand, he was awarded one of the silver medals given to the three “worthiest and most diligent” *Primaners* (first-form boys) of the year. Two days later he was declared to have reached his majority, when he was ceremoniously invested with the Black Eagle, as well as with the Garter, which his Royal grandmamma had sent him from England.

After several months’ service with his regiment (the 1st Foot Guards), Prince William now proceeded to the University of Bonn, where his father had been before him, to go through a course of lectures which had been specially selected for him by the Minister of Public Worship, Dr. Falk, the author of the famous May Laws. The place of Dr. Hinzpeter was now taken by an officer (Captain von Liebenau, of the Prince’s regiment). At this time (autumn of 1877) the Russo-Turkish war was raging, and formed a striking object-lesson to the Prince in connection with the lectures on the history of the nineteenth century, which, among other things, he attended during his first term; while in the following quarter (summer of 1878), his studies in political economy were rudely interrupted by the alarming news that his beloved grandfather had been laid low by Dr. Nobiling, a political economist of a very unprofessorial type. The debate on the Anti-Socialist Bill must have formed a fitting introduction to the lectures on criminal law and procedure which the Prince next attended; and it was by a happy coincidence that his studies in financial science fell in a time when all Germany was ringing with controversy over Prince Bismarck’s new protective tariff and other schemes of fiscal reform.

Further, Prince William happened to be listening to lectures on the history of the Reformation when his father, who acted as Regent during the recovery of the old Emperor from his Socialist wounds, wrote his famous letter to Leo XIII. This new Pope had demanded that certain of the May laws should be repealed. But the Crown Prince, like another King John of England, had replied that no Prussian Sovereign would ever consent to alter the laws and constitution of the land in conformity with the Church, since the independence of the monarchy would suffer grievous attaint were the course of its legislation to be controlled by a foreign Power. This *Kulturkampf* declaration of his father must have had an especial interest for Prince William, in connection with his synchronous studies in Church history. But he was yet to learn that the Church of Rome is a far more indomitable power than his own *spiritus rector*, Dr. Falk, and the "Blood and Iron" Chancellor had ever imagined it to be; and to become a consenting party to the reconciliation between Church and State, on terms very much more humbling to the latter than those which had been so proudly affirmed by his father.*

But study was not the only thing to which the Prince devoted himself at Bonn. He also became a jovial member of the "Borussia," the crack fighting-club, or Corps, of the place, donning its colours and its white cap,

* Among the Prince's private tutors at Bonn was a former writer on the *Figaro* (M. Amédée Pigeon), who taught his pupil to speak French "with the purity of a Parisian," and, indeed, of an Academician, as M. Jules Simon afterwards declared to him at Berlin.

attending its *Kneipabende*, or smoking concerts, where he would "rub a thundering salamander," or join in the chorus of a *Studentenlied* with the rest, and attending its duels of punctilio. The Prince, of course, was not permitted to take any part himself in these personal combats, as it would never have done for the blood of the heir to the Prussian throne to be seen commingling with the sawdust of the *Fechtboden* at the hands of a Herr von Schulz, or a Baron von Schmidt. But he became a no less ardent than adroit practitioner of the art of innocuous fence, and so enthusiastic an admirer of the duello as practised at the German Universities that he afterwards lent the weight of his sovereign authority to the encouragement of a custom which, as involving the possibility of fatal results, is, strictly speaking, forbidden by the law of the land. Speaking at a Commers, or "beer-and-'baccy" symposium, of the "Rhenanians" at Bonn, in 1891, William II. said :

"It is my firm conviction that every youth who enters a Corps (beer-drinking and duelling club) will receive the true direction of his life from the spirit which prevails in them. It is the best education which a young man can get for his future life, and he who scoffs at the German Student Corps fails to penetrate their real meaning. I hope that as long as there are German Corps-students the spirit which is fostered in their Corps, and which is steeled by strength and courage, will be preserved, and that you will always take delight in handling the duelling blade. There are many people who do not understand what our duels really mean, but that must not lead us astray. You and I, who have been Corps-students, know better than that. As in the Middle Ages manly strength and courage were steeled by the practice of jousting or tournaments, so the spirit

and habits which are acquired from membership of a Corps furnish us with that degree of fortitude which is necessary to us when we go out into the world, and which will last as long as there are German universities."

The period of the Prince's residence at Bonn had been rich in events affecting at once his Fatherland and his family. Among the latter, his eldest sister had been married to the Crown Prince of Saxe-Meiningen, and his grandparents had celebrated their golden wedding. He had lost his English aunt at Darmstadt, to whom he had been a frequent visitor from Bonn; and soon thereafter his younger brother, Prince Waldemar, who fell a victim to diphtheria; while his sailor-brother, Prince Henry, had embarked on the *Prinz Adalbert* (Captain MacLean) for a voyage of experience round the world. He had lived through the exciting time of the *attentats* on his grandfather, the Russo-Turkish War, the Berlin Congress, and the conclusion of the Austro-German alliance. In the previous year, 1878, he had gone over to Cologne to meet the Crown Prince Rudolph, and accompany him to Berlin—to Cologne, where, a few weeks previously, he had joined in all the mad humours of the Carnival, and been presented to the editor of the famous *Cologne Gazette*, as to "a General, who also" (*i.e.*, as well as Russia and Turkey) "sent thousands of soldiers" (paper ones) "into battle every day"—which may have caused the Prince to reflect seriously, for the first time perhaps, on the power of the Press.

In the autumn of the same year (1878) he paid a visit to his royal grandmamma at Balmoral—a visit fraught with most important consequences. For, in passing

through London, he made the acquaintance of Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein, who then happened to be staying with her uncle, Prince Christian, at Cumberland Lodge. Next autumn (1879) the acquaintance was renewed when the Prince accepted an invitation of the young lady's father, Duke Frederick of Schleswig-Holstein, to shoot partridges with him on his Silesian estate. This was the Duke who had posed as a Pretender to the Elbe Duchies, after their severance from Denmark by Bismarck's policy of "blood and iron"; and even after their incorporation with Prussia he abated not his claims to his ducal heritage. Repeated efforts were made to bring about a formal settlement, but in vain.

At last the Duke was appealed to on the strength of the attachment which was said to have, in the meantime, sprung up between his daughter and the heir to the Prussian Crown, and certain conditions were mentioned as the price of the Emperor's assent to the contemplated union of hearts. The delicate negotiations on this subject, between the Holstein and the Hohenzollern families, were conducted by Ernst von Stockmar, an intimate friend of the Crown Princess, as his father before him had also been the trusty agent and diplomatic go-between of the Prince Consort. But just when the negotiations seemed to be on the verge of a successful issue, Duke Frederick suddenly died.

A week later, the Crown Prince was able to inform the Dowager Duchess of Schleswig-Holstein that the Emperor had given his consent to his grandson's suit; and then Prince William went to Gotha, where he was privately



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betrothed to the Princess Victoria. The match may have been one of love, but at the same time also it certainly was one of policy, seeing that, in the words of Bismarck, it formed "the concluding act of joy in a drama otherwise rich in strife." Whatever the motives underlying it, the match was ten times more popular than had been the marriage of Prince William's father; for was not the heir to the Crown now going to wed "*eine echt Deutsche Prinzessin*," a thorough German princess?

The marriage was solemnised at Berlin, on 27th February, 1881, with all imaginable pomp—the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Edinburgh being among the wedding guests. The malicious tongue of rumour had been busy with the private life of the Prince before his marriage, though, I am sure, without the least justification in fact; and, as for other rumours referring to his domestic happiness, let us hear, if I may anticipate so far, what he himself said at a banquet given in his honour by the province of Schleswig-Holstein, during the grand autumn manœuvres of 1890:—

"The bond that unites me to this province, and chains me to it in a manner different from all others of my Empire, is the jewel that sparkles at my side—Her Majesty the Empress. Sprung from this soil, the type of the various virtues of a German princess, it is to her that I owe it that I am able to meet the severe labours of my office with a happy spirit, and make head against them."

After his marriage Prince William took up his abode in the Marble Palace at Potsdam—a modest enough little residence, of mongrel style, standing on the picturesque banks of the Havel; and now, in an establishment

of his own, he began to devote himself with ardour to his military duties. At first he served with the 1st Foot Guards, and was then transferred to the Hussars of the Guard, with whom he continued till he rose to be their Colonel, with the exception of a short period during which he was put to gain experience of the other arm—the Artillery. But his favourite weapon was the *arme blanche*, and his favourite uniform the showy scarlet tunic of the Garde-Husaren. By the year 1885 he had become Colonel of this fine regiment. “Never,” wrote Dr. Hinzpeter, “had any youth entered the Prussian Army with less apparent fitness, from the physical point of view, for becoming a brilliant and dashing cavalry officer than young Prince William. And yet he had done so by exerting himself to the utmost, and converting his natural weakness into a source of energy and strength; so that when at last he led his Hussar regiment past his keenly observant grandfather, his uncle, Prince Frederick Charles—so famous, and so feared by him as a cavalry critic—could not help saying, half in praise and half in apology, ‘You have done very well; I should never have believed it!’”

Take this one little anecdote as a specimen of others of a similar kind. One of the most aristocratic clubs in Berlin had acquired an ugly name for gambling, and brought ruin on some of its members. Hearing of this, Colonel Prince William forbade the officers of his regiment from frequenting the club, which was thus in turn threatened with ruin. Thereupon the chairman of the club, a powerful noble, went to the Emperor and begged him to use his influence with the Prince, in

order to revoke the damaging interdict. His Majesty sent for his grandson, but the latter stood firm.

"Allow me one question, your Majesty," he said. "Am I still Colonel of the regiment, or am I not?"

"Of course you are," returned the Kaiser.

"Then permit me, your Majesty, either to assert my position or to resign it."

"Nay, there can be no question of that, as I am not likely to find another Colonel so good as you."

When the chairman of the club returned for his answer, "I am very sorry," said the Emperor; "I have done my best, but the Colonel won't hear of it."

The studious pupil of Cassel, and the student of Bonn, had become one of the most painstaking and dashing officers in the Prussian Army; and it soon became clear that Prince William was a very different stamp of soldier from his civilian-minded father. His whole soul was in his work; he studied theory as well as practice, and even went so far in his researches into the field of the art military as to deliver a lecture on the manipulative tactics of the Romans. But other arts also claimed his attention. It was characteristic of the flaming Chauvinism which had begun to form so marked a feature in his character that he became a patron of a Richard Wagner Society, at Potsdam; and his leisure hours were devoted to the brush. "From his gifted mother," as Dr. Hinzpeter wrote, "he had inherited a certain talent for artistic work, as well as a warm appreciation for all artistic creations"; and he was never happier than when indulging his own bent in this direction.

Hitherto, Prince William had not been very much of

a traveller. It was not thought necessary, especially by his grandfather, that he should make the tour of the world as his sailor-brother had done, and as the Tsarevitch, afterwards Nicholas II., was subsequently made to do. The early *Wanderjahre* of the Prince never carried him beyond Vienna, or St. Petersburg, or London. Soon after his own marriage, he and his Princess had attended the wedding of the Crown Prince of Austria, and his visit to Vienna was twice repeated—in 1883 and 1885—for he seems to have entertained a sincere regard for the character of the ill-fated Prince Rudolph. On the last of these occasions Prince William proved himself a bold and successful chamois-hunter, in spite of his being but a one-armed shot, and in the following year he achieved a still greater name as a bear-hunter, as the guest of Prince Radziwill in Lithuania, where he was described by an upper forester as "brave to rashness." His only regret was that, when he had gone to St. Petersburg two years previously (May, 1884), to congratulate the Tsarevitch on the attainment of his majority, he had not been able to get any sport in the forests of Russia. Here, however, he managed to leave behind him a reputation, if not as a sportsman, at least as a linguist. For, at a grand review in his honour, he startled the Cavalier Guards by addressing them in their native tongue—two or three words, no doubt, got up for the occasion.

But, otherwise, sham and superficiality characterised the Prince in nothing which he undertook. In all he did he was terribly in earnest and thorough, and his capacity was equal to his appetite for work. It is safe to say that no one of his time ever spent a more industrious and

laborious youth than William II. Conscious of his coming heritage, while ignorant that it was coming so soon, he left nothing undone to prepare himself for his high career. His only kind of self-indulgence was work and study of the most multifarious kind. Thus he had not long settled down with his regiment, at Potsdam, before he begged his grandfather—the great object of his idolatry—to give him an opportunity of becoming thoroughly acquainted with the administrative system of Prussia—its provincial and communal machinery of government; and for a whole winter, concurrently with his military service, he devoted himself to the practical mastery of this intricate subject, under the care of Dr. Achenbach, civil governor of Brandenburg. He attended the meetings of some of the local assemblies, joined in their debates, descended mines, delivered lectures, and made speeches bristling with Brandenburg patriotism.

To these labours he then added a stiff course of instruction under the Minister of Finance; and having thus mastered the administrative system of the Monarchy, he next set himself to study the management of the foreign affairs of the Empire. For this purpose he got himself “commanded to do service” in the Foreign Office during the winter of 1886-87, and for six months he may be said to have sat as a docile and admiring pupil at the feet of the greatest statesman of his time. Never had any heir to a throne been trained for his high career by such competent and experienced tutors. For never had the world seen such a combination of personalities as was presented by William I., the wisest sovereign; Moltke, the greatest soldier; and Bismarck,

the most consummate statesman, of his age. Prince William had been the admiring—nay, the adoring and industrious pupil of all three; and people concluded that, if he did not turn out a good Sovereign, it was certainly not for lack of good schooling.

Meanwhile, the outside world knew but little of the Prince's real character, and nothing had surprised it more than the assertion of an anonymous French writer—the author of some very clever sketches (*"Société de Berlin"*), clearly drawn from life—that—

"Prince William is the most intelligent of all the Princes of the Royal family. With that brave, enterprising, ambitious, hot-headed, but a heart of gold, sympathetic in the highest degree, impulsive, spirited, vivacious, and possessed of a gift of repartee which makes one almost doubt that he is a German. He will certainly be a distinguished man, and probably a great sovereign—possibly even a second Frederick the Great."

This had been written of the Prince when he was in his twenty-fourth year, and now (1887) he was in his twenty-eighth. By this time it was only known of him generally in Berlin that he had developed into a dashing soldier and a fiery patriot. For few had possessed the advantages of close observation enjoyed by the French writer, and, in spite of the fierce light which beats upon a throne, this light often sheds but little illumination on the character of those who stand upon its steps. But the little that people already did know about the Prince had stimulated their curiosity to know more, and the time was now fast approaching when this curiosity was to be gratified in a manner the most unexpected and complete.

CHAPTER II.

A TRAGIC TIME.

An Imperial Hamlet—Father and son—Illness of the Crown Prince—German diagnosis—Sir M. Mackenzie—The Jubilee pageant—From Osborne to San Remo—"My poor son, Fritz"—A "*moderner Mensch*"—Prince William as speechifier at Bonn, Brandenburg, and Potsdam—Rumours of war—The "Tsar Peacekeeper"—Army reform—"We Germans fear God," &c.—"I repudiate such imputations"—The "Bismarck Dynasty"—A prime historical document—Politics and pathology—Prince William and the Christian Socialists—Court Chaplain Stöcker—The Waldersees—Bible *versus* Bebel—The Dom clergy and the Prince—Sad news from San Remo—Blow upon blow—The old Emperor—Death and dying words—"Fritz, lieber Fritz"—Crown Prince William.

PRINCE WILLIAM had just completed his course of instruction in state-craft under the immediate care of Prince Bismarck, when his father, then in his fifty-sixth year, was seized with a mysterious illness (January, 1887). But for several years before this it had been painfully apparent to the intimate friends of the Crown Prince that he was gradually wasting away—decaying, almost dying, for want of something to do. He had become "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought" even more than Hamlet. Sighing for a life of action which would enable him to realise his ideals—his somewhat impracticable ideals—he had nevertheless been condemned to a passive life of contemplation.

Strictly speaking, the Crown Prince had been one of the unemployed ever since his wars were over. He fretted his life away from want of work. Pending the passing into his hands of his father's sceptre, he had more than once seriously thought of taking to agriculture, like another Cincinnatus, as a means of keeping his faculties fresh and adding to his knowledge of practical life. But his private means were unequal to the experiment, and again he relapsed into the apathy of inaction. "He felt the void," wrote Freytag, in his Tacitus-like character-sketch of the Crown Prince.

"A certain lassitude set in ; dissatisfaction came over him and grew greater and greater . . . He was fond of indulging in gloomy thoughts and pessimistic humours, and sometimes even cherished the idea of renouncing the throne in case of its becoming vacant, and leaving the government to his son. Even the persuasions of the Crown Princess failed permanently to banish this dejection . . . But the increasing lassitude in his being was, to their bitter sorrow, perceptible to those who had known him in his youth. He began to grow old in mind and body, and, long before the terrible disease showed itself in him, one could sorrowfully say that his vital energy was no longer that of a man who was soon to be called upon to wear the Imperial crown."

The Crown Prince was certainly not cut down in the full vigour of his powers ; far from it. The malady which ultimately carried him off was but the consequence of the inactive, gloomy, and fretful life which he had led as heir-in-waiting ever since the French war. Doubtless, too, he must have felt his condemnation to a rôle of utter idleness and self-effacement, all the more bitterly by contrast with the bustling career of energy on which his

eldest son had now embarked. For a long time he had flattered and buoyed himself up with the hope that *he* was the coming man; but now he had realised the fact that his son had already supplanted him in this respect. "He who," once said the Crown Prince sadly, "is at once the son of so great a father, and the father of so gifted a son, may well be regarded as superfluous."

And, indeed, if the truth must be told, a very considerable section of the German people had already come to place their hopes in Prince William. For, above all things, he had acquired the reputation of having become very anti-English in a reactionary sense; and it was feared that the feminine influences, under the complete dominion of which his sentimental and civilian-minded father was known to live, would prove detrimental to the highest interests of a military State like Germany, not yet ripe by a long way for the grafting of a fantastic Liberalism on its sturdy, all-sufficing stem. In Conservative and military circles the Crown Prince had never been very popular, and he became less and less so when it was seen that his son seemed to possess all the virtues which were thought to be lacking in his sire.

For the son was strenuous and strong-willed, an ardent patriot and an eager soldier; and it was known that he simply worshipped his grandfather as the incarnation of all sovereign virtues. A few weeks after Prince William had presented the old Emperor with his fourth great grandson, His Majesty celebrated his ninetieth birthday (22nd March), amid circumstances of universal love and admiration without a parallel. But, alas! the satisfaction of the venerable old monarch on this unique occasion was

marred by the knowledge, as yet withheld from the outer world, that his son, the Crown Prince, could only express his congratulations in a hoarse and husky voice.

A mysterious growth had made its appearance in his throat at the beginning of this year (1887), and the surgeons had already been busy on it with their electric cautery. Their medical treatment had been suspended during the birthday fêtes, when the Crown Prince and Princess gave a grand banquet in honour of the betrothal of their second son, Prince Henry the Navigator II. (as one might call him), to his cousin, Princess Irene of Hesse; and then this treatment was resumed. Already the doctors had their suspicions, and more than suspicions, as to the real nature of their illustrious patient's malady; but, in the meantime, they contented themselves with cauterising away the tumour in his throat, and sending him to Ems—historic Ems—for a month's rest, the public being meanwhile led to believe that he was merely suffering from the effects of a cold. If, on the Prince returning from Ems, it should be seen that the growth had made its reappearance in the interval, then all doubt as to its true character would be dispelled.

The Crown Prince came back to Berlin, and it was found that the tumour had become larger than ever. Then his doctors—half-a-dozen of them—met once more in serious consultation, and unanimously came to the conclusion that their patient was clearly suffering from cancer. No time was to be lost if the ravages of the disease were to be stayed, and the life of the Crown Prince saved. An operation such as had hitherto, as a rule, proved to be harmless and successful in similar

cases, was decided on, and Saturday morning, the 21st May, fixed for its performance in the well-lighted studio of the Crown Princess. But, on the previous evening, Dr. Morell Mackenzie had arrived from London in response to a summons based on the agreement of the German doctors that it would be well, before proceeding to action, to call in some throat specialist of the first European rank. The name of Dr. Mackenzie had been suggested by Dr. Wegner, body physician to the Crown Prince, and he was accordingly sent for. It is well to remember this, because the English specialist was subsequently said to have been obtruded upon his German colleagues by the independent will of the Crown Princess. As a matter of fact they had all previously assented to his being called in.

His verdict was that the Crown Prince was suffering, not from cancer, but from a mere wart on one of his vocal cords. Then the vital operation, which, if performed at this stage, would in all probability have added years to the Crown Prince's life, was deferred. On the other hand the general public, now fully alive to the seriousness of the situation, were encouraged to believe that the German doctors had erroneously diagnosed the disease, and that the English specialist, by his superior insight and firmness, had saved the life of his illustrious patient. In the malignant nature of his disease Mackenzie would not believe until proof positive had been furnished him by the microscopic analysis of the famous anatomist, Professor Virchow; but the peculiar circumstances of the case rendered it impossible for the Professor to satisfy the demand of his English colleague

for absolute demonstration. Mackenzie had given the Crown Prince and Princess hope; and their Imperial Highnesses had returned the compliment by bestowing on him their complete confidence. Nothing was more natural. It was the psychology of this medical drama which formed at once its most painful and pathetic feature.

The case was handed over to Dr. Mackenzie for treatment in the manner he had proposed; and, the better to profit by this treatment, the Crown Prince came to England—all the more readily, as he was eager to join the Jubilee family circle of his royal mother-in-law. The Prince had ever been fond of figuring at pomps and pageants, and here was an opportunity for gratifying his love of the histrionic, such as he had never enjoyed before. Prince William also rode in the historic procession to Westminster Abbey; but the gaudiness of the Red Hussar, with his gold facings, was utterly lost in the gorgeousness of the white, Lohengrin-like figure of his father, with his shining cuirass, and eagle crested helm. Poor Crown Prince! It was his panoramic apotheosis—the last pageant in which he was ever to figure as a living man.

Mackenzie had become master of the medical situation, to the intense disgust and alarm of all true Germans. For they were disgusted to think that their own famous men of science had been discarded in favour of this doubtful English doctor, and alarmed by the frequent statements that this doctor was seeking to combat the ravages of the Crown Prince's disease—for which a timely use of the surgeon's knife was believed to be the only effective cure—by puffing harmless powder down his

throat, and dragging him about from place to place in quest of therapeutic air. The only air which the Crown Prince was not allowed to breathe was that of his own native land. That of the Isle of Wight proved too relaxing, and accordingly he was sent to Braemar. But presently the air of Deeside became a little too cold, and then the Prince was taken to Toblach in the Tyrol, which, in turn, was eventually found to be too damp. Here he had a choking fit, and was removed to Venice. From Venice he went to Baveno, on the Lago Maggiore, and thence, after a few weeks' stay, to San Remo on the Italian Riviera (3rd November).

At Baveno the Crown Prince had celebrated his fifty-sixth birthday in the bosom of all his family. Prince William had not long returned from Baveno to Berlin, when he was despatched by his grandfather on a special mission of inquiry to San Remo. The Prince only reached that place in time to learn that even the Mackenzie set of doctors were now unanimous in pronouncing his father to be suffering from an incurable illness—from cancer. How he received the news is stated in none of the medical reports which were officially published after his father's death. But there is, at least, every reason to believe that he more than ever shared the bitter feeling of resentment towards the English medical attendant of his father, which now swept over Germany like a storm. "After all," wrote one journal at Berlin, "it is now seen that our own German doctors understood the Crown Prince's illness, while the English specialist clearly misunderstood it; and now, alas! it is too late to repair his error of diagnosis." It certainly was too

late ; and the Crown Prince himself, on the urgent advice of his distracted wife, decided against a radical operation, consenting only to tracheotomy in the event of this relieving process becoming necessary.

The divulgence of the truth had thrown Germany into a greater state of excitement and consternation than had ever been experienced in the Fatherland, since the French delivered their declaration of war ; and it was the Emperor himself who had revealed the truth. For the doctors at San Remo, in the presence of Prince William, had agreed to prepare the German people for the worst by the publication of a series of graduated bulletins ; and great, therefore, was their surprise to find that their private telegram to the Emperor had been at once communicated to the public. The Emperor was most profoundly affected by the news ; and it is not too much to say that the shock helped to hasten his Majesty's own end. "I have only one wish," the nonagenarian Kaiser had said before Prince William's departure for the South, "which I should like to be gratified before I die, and that is to hear my poor son, Fritz, speak as clearly as he used to do." But this was a wish which the Emperor now saw could never be realised. His "poor son Fritz" had lost his voice for ever. But what the Crown Prince had lost beyond recall, his son had already found and was using freely.

When first it became known that the Crown Prince was seriously ill, all eyes were at once turned to his promising son ; and it almost looked as if this son, conscious of the attention whereof he had so suddenly become the object, was bent on doing all he could to

keep alive, and even stimulate, this public curiosity in his character. At any rate he now began to assert himself more frequently and more prominently than any Prussian Prince of his position had ever done before. Self-effacement was the rôle which had always been exacted of his father; but Prince William had been emphatically pronounced to be a "*moderner Mensch*" by one who knew him well—a man, that is to say, thoroughly up-to-date in all the principles and practices of the time, including the growing practice of self-advertisement as a necessary condition of success—and, above all things, he now began to indulge, on all available occasions, in a habit of making speeches, which was enough to make his ancestors, William the Silent, or Frederick William the Soldier, turn in their astonished graves.

On parting from his stricken father, after the Jubilee fêtes in London, Prince William had hastened over to Bonn to join in the festal commemoration of the founding of his old duelling Corps; and on this occasion he delivered a stirring harangue about the black and white banner of Prussia, the iron cross as the reward of heroism in the field, and the analogy which subsisted between the 1st Foot Guards of Potsdam, and the "Borussians" of Bonn, as nurseries of all the virtues which should ever distinguish the Princes of his House. But presently he found a much more effective stage than the banqueting hall of the "Golden Star" at Bonn.

This was the grave of General Von Zieten, the Great Frederick's great Horse-Captain, across which the Prince had stumbled in the course of his autumn manœuvres with the Guards. Ranking up his troopers in a hollow

square around the horseman-hero's grave, and planting the standard of the regiment at the head of the grassy mound between two officers with drawn swords—a most effective bit of stage-setting, it must be owned—he proceeded to deliver himself of a most fervid harangue on the military and other virtues of the “*alte Zieten*,” and wound up by calling for three cheers for “our most gracious Emperor and all-highest War-Lord”—an appeal which was responded to by the Hussars with such a resounding war-whoop as Zieten himself had certainly never led off in the wildest of his charges.

A little later, the Prince attended the ceremonious laying of the foundation-stone of a monument to his father's cousin, Prince Frederick Charles, at Frankfort-on-the-Oder; and here, again, his military enthusiasm drew from him a flaming word-flood of eulogy on the famous 3rd, or Brandenburg, Army Corps, which the “Red Prince” had trained up to the performance of such heroic deeds of valour as the storming of the Düppel Redoubts, and the holding fast of Bazaine's whole French Army, five times its size, on the ensanguined plain of Mars-la-Tour. The Hohenzollerns would never forget this unparalleled performance, and what they owed to the devotion of the doughty Brandenburgers. In future, too, the Corps would always give a good account of itself, and, even if shrunk to a few hundreds, these would bar the enemy's advance, unless across their corpses.

In his next military harangue, Prince William made his first public allusion to the illness of his father. This was when he had ranked up his men around their Christmas-tree to receive their presents:

"Hussars! Since we celebrated Christmas last year in this place, times have changed—they have become very serious. We stand on the brink of a future which is perhaps uncertain—hence it is fitting for us to think of the motto we wear on our head-pieces, 'With God for King and Fatherland!' Above all should we think of the words, 'With God!' May He stand by us in this sad time, when one of our greatest Generals and Commanders, who has led our Armies in so many wars, stands under a severe trial. How fervently should the heart of every Prussian and German soldier pray for the restoration to health of this distinguished General! May the Lord, who has always stood by our Army in serious and critical times, continue to be with us!"

Apart from the incurable illness of the Crown Prince, the seriousness of the times thus referred to by his son had been further intensified by the war rumours and war preparations which then formed the pre-occupation of all Germany. In the spring of 1887, after being dissolved for at first refusing to do so, the Reichstag had at length voted another immense addition to the Army; and now again, in the winter of the same year, the Government had proposed such a change in the service conditions of the Landwehr and Landsturm as would practically swell the fencible force of the Empire, in the event of war, by more than half a million men. France was ever and anon blowing the revenge-trumpet, and Russia had again been massing troops in the most threatening manner towards her western frontier.

On returning from his first visit to San Remo, Prince William had journeyed to Wittenberg to meet and greet the Tsar, who was coming from Copenhagen on a visit to the old Emperor; but, at this particular time, Alexander III.

was believed in Berlin to be much more of a peace-breaker than a peace-maker; and it was only after his famous interview with Bismarck at the Russian Embassy, and the consequent exposure of the forged Bulgarian despatches, that the tension of the political situation became relaxed.

But, in spite of the dispelling of the diplomatic misunderstandings which had threatened to embroil the two Empires, the German Government deemed it prudent to proceed with its scheme of Army reform; and Prince William was present at a military conference between the Emperor, Counts Moltke and Waldersee, and the Minister of War. Within the last few months—ever, in fact, since the falling ill of his father—Prince William had been enjoying ever more of the confidence of his grandsire; and on the occasion of this council he displayed such a grasp and insight into the subject under discussion that, shortly after, on his twenty-ninth birthday, he was presented by his pleased and proud grandfather with his patent as Major-General. It was in this capacity that, a few days later, he occupied the Court-box in the Reichstag—of which the galleries were crammed with eager spectators as they had never been before—and listened for two whole hours, with more admiration than he could express, to what was, perhaps, the greatest and most effective speech which Bismarck had ever delivered—the speech in which, in connection with the new Army Bill, he indulged in a most masterly survey of the military and political situation of Europe, winding up, after a warning allusion to the “*furor Teutonicus*,” with his famous, “We Germans fear God, and nothing else in the world.”

This was three days after the text of the Austro-German Treaty of Defensive Alliance (concluded 7th October, 1879) had been published to the world in order to throw light upon a situation which had simply become intolerable in its intensity; and the divulgence of this document, followed by Bismarck's great speech on the subject, made such an overwhelming impression on the Reichstag that, on the Chancellor resuming his seat, it hastened to pass *en bloc*, without more ado, the Bill which added so tremendously to the fighting force of the Empire. Not one single dissentient voice was raised from among the ranks even of the Social Democrats. Never, since the declaration of war by France, had the Reichstag been the scene of such national enthusiasm and unanimity.

The tears welled up in Prince William's eyes, and he hastened to the Palace with the joyful news. Moved almost beyond the power of words, the old Emperor repeatedly embraced and kissed his grandson, who had been the first to tell him of what had happened; and from the Royal Palace the Prince hurried to Radziwill Palace, to congratulate the Chancellor on his great speech.

It was little wonder that the zeal and enthusiasm which Prince William had displayed in connection with the new Army Bill should have but tended to strengthen the popular belief that he was a young man eaten up with military ambition, and capable of plunging his country into a war for the mere sake of glory, which Frederick the Great confessed had been the sole motive for his first Silesian campaign. But to all such interpretations of his

character the Prince himself returned the following answer, at a banquet of the Provincial Diet of Brandenburg :

“In my rides through Brandenburg, in the course of the manœuvres, the flourishing fields, and the trades which I found in full activity, clearly showed me where the true foundations of national prosperity and fruitful labour were to be found. I am well aware that the public at large, especially abroad, imputes to me a thoughtless inclination for war, and a craving for glory. God preserve me from such criminal levity ! I repudiate such imputations with indignation. But still, gentlemen, I am a soldier, and all Brandenburgers are soldiers. This I know. Therefore, let me conclude with the words that on Monday last our great Chancellor addressed to the Reichstag, which on that day showed us the grand spectacle of the popular representatives going locked hand-in-hand with the Government. Let me conclude by adapting to Brandenburg the sentence : ‘We Brandenburgers only fear God, and nothing else in this world.’”

But there was another imputation, more damaging to his character than even the rumour of his “thoughtless inclination for war,” which the Prince also thought it necessary about this time to repudiate with equal scorn ; and that was the rumour that he had joined—was, in fact, the head of—a conspiracy to prevent his mortally stricken father from succeeding to the throne, in the event of its becoming vacant by the death of the old Emperor. The whole story was a baseless fabrication, nor was it made a whit the more credible by being subsequently tricked-out afresh in a malevolent magazine-article on the “Bismarck Dynasty” from the pen of an anonymous but well-known journalist who was brusquely denied an interview with the German Chancellor, and who then, with the petty spitefulness peculiar to some

of his tribe, replied to this policy of slam with a policy of slander.

There certainly was a question of the afflicted Crown Prince waiving his rights to ascend the throne ; yet this question had been raised by no one but the Crown Prince himself. We have the authority of Freytag, already quoted, for saying that, long before he was finally stricken down, the Crown Prince, in his gloomy moments, had repeatedly spoken of renouncing the throne altogether in favour of his son. Now, if thus he spoke while as yet his body was whole, how much more must he have been inclined to express himself in the same sense when his body had become unsound? And, as a matter of positive fact, he did now so express himself, as witness the following official statement : *

“The assertion that the Emperor Frederick, in his own interest and in that of his Consort, as well as from high moral and practical considerations, desired to rule, for a short time at least, is a positive fabrication. The Emperor Frederick, who had the highest conceivable sense of the duties connected with the Imperial dignity, had placed it beyond all doubt that he would not assume the government of the country *if he were proved to be incurably affected with cancer*. This only corresponded with the noble and unselfish bent of his mind ; while among those who might eventually have been called upon to approach the Emperor on the subject, there was no one

* Issued by the Foreign Office in reply to a certain statement that had been imputed to Sir M. Mackenzie. This official declaration, though rather overshadowed by the other manifestoes connected with the accession of William II., was by far the most important document of the day, from an historical point of view ; and he who fails to grasp its meaning now, fails to provide himself with the only true key to a proper understanding of that tempestuously controversial time.

who was not determined from the outset to refrain from broaching the question to the august sufferer, so long as he himself did not take the initiative. As this was well-known (at San Remo), those who, for reasons which we cannot probe, desired to secure the Emperor's accession to the throne, even under circumstances incapacitating him from governing, made it their task to deceive the illustrious patient as to his condition."

Far be it from me to seek to stir-up afresh the embers of a painful controversy. But it would be quite impossible for me to do justice to the subject of this sketch without reference to facts which go far to explain certain incidents in the subsequent conduct of Prince William—and, in particular, his unnatural-looking attitude towards his mother. There can be no doubt whatever that the Prince himself was never a party to any scheme for keeping his father from the throne. On the other hand, however, it is no less certain that he looked upon his father as having been brought to the throne by a plot to deceive him as to his true condition, and to place upon his head a crown which, in a certain contingency, he had clearly resolved to renounce.

That contingency had now occurred. The Crown Prince had been *unanimously* pronounced by his doctors (at San Remo, 9th November) to be clearly suffering from an incurable disease; and yet, on the death of his father (9th March following), he had hastened to ascend the vacant throne! How was this apparent inconsistency to be accounted for? How Prince Bismarck (and with him, apparently, Prince William) did at least account for it, was by assuming that "Sir Morell Mackenzie," to continue the statement above quoted, "had in the meantime

taken it upon him to play a political rôle . . . and to exercise a decisive influence upon the destinies of the German nation." Whether this charge was a just one, were a very delicate thing to decide; and still more delicate were it to discuss the reasons for supposing that there might have been a regular agreement—call it not plot—express or implied, between the Crown Princess and the English doctor (who was known to be ardently, nay, blindly devoted to her interests) to deceive the illustrious sufferer as to his true condition, after this condition had been made as clear to him as scientific language could convey.

But one thing is absolutely certain—and on the English doctor's own showing—namely, that after he had at last joined his colleagues in pronouncing the Crown Prince's malady to be cancer, he went back on this verdict, and suggested from time to time that, after all, it might be some less dangerous disease—in fact, one that need not have a fatal issue at all. That Mackenzie dropped into his patient's mind the elements of doubt, after all possible ground for doubt had once been removed from it, is beyond question. The only question is whether these doubts, which had the effect of making the Crown Prince go back upon his original resolution and mount the throne, were suggested to him on purely medical or on purely political grounds. Prince William himself seems to have been troubled by no dubiety whatever on the subject; and his very natural indignation at the way in which his father had thus been so cruelly made the sport of political plotters, was rendered all the more intense by the thought that he himself had been so

falsely accused of unfilial conduct towards his afflicted sire—an accusation the harder to bear as, if not originating, it had at least served as a motive-power at San Remo.

Prince William was guiltless of the plotting laid to his charge. But, unfortunately for popular belief on this score, he himself had lent some little air of verisimilitude to current rumour by the prominent way in which he had begun to assert himself, speaking and acting almost as if his father had already vanished from the scene. Not content with allowing himself to effervesce in his military harangues, he also lent the charms of his perfervid eloquence to a movement of reform which, strangely enough, had been taken up by a party of reaction. The meeting-place of this party—of which the chief ornaments were the Court Chaplain, Stöcker, who had rendered himself so notorious by his baiting of the Jews, and Minister Von Puttkamer, who cherished almost equally mediæval theories of paternal government—was the drawing-room of the Countess Waldersee, wife of the man who, as Quartermaster-General, was in training to succeed to the office of Marshal Moltke.*

That Prince William should have gone to the Waldersees to address an influential meeting presided over by a rabid anti-Semite like Herr Stöcker—who was also the founder of the “Christian Socialist” party, was generally regarded as a proof that the Prince had allowed himself to become the tool of political schemers. The avowed object of the meeting was to beat-up funds for the work

* The Countess Waldersee, born a Miss Lee, of New York, had, by her first marriage to a member of the Schleswig-Holstein family, become closely related to Princess William.

of the City Mission of Berlin. For this purpose the Princess William had already organised a bazaar, which brought in a considerable sum; and the Prince himself had thought of getting up an "equestrian festival" to the same end. Failing this, he had recourse to the high horse of his own eloquence as a means of collecting cash for the lay evangelisation of the masses under the guidance of the Jew-devouring Stöcker.

It was to no purpose, as the outside world argued, that Count Waldersee, in opening the meeting, denied that its aims had the very remotest connection with party politics. For Prince William's ensuing speech gave the contradiction direct to this avowal. What he dwelt upon was the revolutionary character of the time, and the necessity for substituting the teaching of the Bible for the teaching of Bebel, as a light to lighten the masses. These masses, in Berlin especially, lived without faith of any kind, except faith in anarchy, and they must be brought back to the Church as a means not so much of baulking Satan of his prey, as of increasing their "respect for law" and their "love of the monarchy." It was the protection of "throne and altar" which seemed to be uppermost in Prince William's mind when passing round the hat for the means of carrying out the "Christian Socialist idea." The godless masses should be converted, not primarily as a means of saving their souls from the kingdom of hell, but of saving the kingdom of the Hohenzollerns from the democratic dangers of the time.

By uncharitable critics it was therefore argued that Prince William had come forward to pose as a friend

of the masses merely in order to strengthen the stability of the monarchy, to the crown of which, it was daily becoming clearer, he would himself so soon succeed. But the adverse criticism of which he now became the object was not without its counterblasts and encouragement, and one of these took the form of a New Year's congratulation from the Dom clergy, with the anti-Semitic Stöcker at their head, who eulogised the Prince for his "single-minded" efforts in the cause of the kingdom of God, and reminded him of what was written in the Holy Gospel: "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father which is in heaven." To this clerical congratulation the Prince replied :

"The expression of your sympathy with His Imperial Highness, the Crown Prince, my dearly beloved father, has especially touched me. I bow to the opinion of medical science. But, at the same time, I hope, with the rest of my family and the whole nation, that my father's powerful constitution, graciously aided by the Almighty, will enable him to overcome his serious illness.

"You refer to my endeavours on behalf of those who are suffering in soul and body, and to the way in which my conduct in this respect has been misconstrued in many quarters. This has caused me pain. But it will not deter me from ever following the example of our exalted Emperor, and my dear father, in doing all I can, uninfluenced by party motives, to promote the welfare of the distressed."

As to the Prince's hope for the ultimate recovery of his father, in spite of the "opinion of medical science," it was doomed to cruel disappointment. For a few weeks later—three days only after the Prince had rushed from the Reichstag to the Palace with the glorious news that

half a million men had been added to the war-effective of the Fatherland—there was flashed to Berlin from San Remo the melancholy news that the Crown Prince had at last submitted to the relieving operation of tracheotomy, on the thirtieth anniversary, almost, of the day on which he had made his triumphal entry into Berlin with his blooming English bride.

The old Emperor was most deeply affected, and, in his distraction at the conflicting accounts which continued to reach him, he at once despatched to San Remo the great surgeon, Professor von Bergmann, with Count Radolinski, in order to bring back the truth, and also, if possible, the Crown Prince himself. "At this moment," wrote Mackenzie, three days after the operation, "medical science does not permit me to affirm that any other disease is present than chronic interstitial inflammation of the larynx, combined with perichondritis." But this was not the "medical science" to the "opinion" of which Prince William had bowed. The Prince was all on the side of Bergmann, and Bergmann had not been long at San Remo—where scenes of the most painful character occurred between him and the members of the Mackenzie party—before he was most graciously dismissed from attendance on the illustrious sufferer.

But when about to return to Berlin his departure was delayed by the Emperor, who telegraphed to him to await the arrival of Prince William; for the Prince had, in the meantime, been despatched to Karlsruhe to attend the funeral of his cousin, Prince Ludwig of Baden, a most charming and promising young man, who stood high in the favour and affection of his Imperial grandfather. His

untimely death had almost broken the hearts of his parents, who were at San Remo when the news of his serious illness reached them. The hand of God seemed to be resting heavily on the Hohenzollern kith and kin. The nonagenarian Kaiser could bear up no longer under this bitter accumulation of family misfortunes. He had already abandoned all hope of hearing the sound of his "poor son Fritz's" voice, and he now began to despair of ever again seeing him in the flesh. But he would make one last effort. So, after attending the obsequies of his cousin at Karlsruhe, Prince William continued his journey to San Remo, to see whether his father could not be induced to return, as soon as possible, to Berlin.

But he had not been three days there when he was again summoned back to Berlin. Here he arrived on the 7th March (1888), only to find that his beloved grandfather had had a serious fainting fit the day before. Age and sorrow were fast hurrying him to his end. Yet, on the return of his grandson from San Remo, he was able to receive and talk with him repeatedly about the health of his father, as well as political and military affairs. A little later His Majesty sent for Bismarck, and addressed to him words of gratitude and thanks, laying his hand upon the stooping Chancellor's shoulder, and saying, even when his thoughts began to wander: "Thou hast done that well."

All the family, and the great officers of State, were summoned to the side of the Emperor's camp-bed. The doctor supported His Majesty, who held the Empress's hand in his, while the Grand Duchess of Baden and Prince William stood close by. He recognised the

members of his family, asked after Count Moltke, then desired Prince William to come near, and talked to him—in his wandering speech—about the Army and the whole Prussian people. After that, “alluding to our alliances,” as an eye-witness of the scene afterwards wrote, “and the possible wars of neighbouring nations: ‘Thou must treat the Emperor of Russia with consideration, for that will only redound to our good.’” But, previous to this, the Emperor had said to Prince William: “If anyone were treacherously to attack us, I should unhesitatingly draw the sword with Kaiser Franz Joseph, and fight to the last.”

Sometimes when his thoughts were wandering the dying Monarch would think of his afflicted son and successor, far away on the Mediterranean shore, and murmur, “*Fritz, lieber Fritz.*” His last words were those with which he replied to a question from his only daughter, the Grand Duchess of Baden—who, after burying a beloved son, had hurried to the death-bed of a beloved sire—as to whether he was tired and would like to rest. “I have no time at present to be tired,” responded His Majesty, his ever-dominant thought of work and duty still strong in death; and soon thereafter, on the morning of Friday, March 9th, the grand old Monarch, amid an Empire’s lamentation, gently and without a struggle, passed to his everlasting rest, leaving his sorrowing grandson, as Crown Prince, kneeling at his bier.

A glorious life had been closed by the noblest and most natural of deaths, and the stirring drama of modern German history had reached the close of another splendid act.

CHAPTER III.

CROWN PRINCE.

The Emperor Frederick—Arrival in Berlin—In the Dom Church—*"Vale, senex Imperator!"*—*"Cæsar moriturus vos salutat"*—"My dear Prince"—The Battenberg match—Bismarck's opposition—The "Banner-bearer of the Reich"—Decorations for Jews and Radicals—Puttkamer's dismissal—"Imperator Rex"—The Crown Prince and his Brigade—A march-past at Charlottenburg—"Learn to suffer without complaining"—A royal wedding—Queen Victoria in Berlin—Medical wranglings—Death of "Frederick the Noble"—William II.—The Hussars of the Guard—Sealing-up of the New Palace.

ON the morning of 9th March, a telegram from Berlin reached San Remo, addressed to "His Majesty the Emperor Frederick"; that is to say, German Emperor, in virtue of his being Frederick III. of Prussia. The contents of the telegram were expressed in its address. On the previous day, while as yet the old Emperor was hovering between life and death, a despatch from Bismarck had been received at San Remo (8th), urging the immediate return of the Crown Prince; and the latter, on the evidence of Sir M. Mackenzie, had already decided to start for Berlin on the 10th. In the meantime, however, the news of his father's death reached him on the 9th, and he telegraphed to Bismarck that he would leave on the morrow.

At Leipzig the home-returning Emperor was met by the Chancellor and the whole Prussian Ministry; while at the Charlottenburg station, near Berlin, where His Majesty arrived in a blinding storm of snow, he was received by only his nearest relatives, the Crown Prince and Princess, Prince Henry, and the Hereditary Prince of Saxe-Meiningen. "The Emperor," as I described the scene at the time, "greeted his eldest son with especial tenderness, while the Crown Princess fell upon her home-coming father-in-law's breast and wept bitterly. The whole scene was exceedingly affecting, and many of the onlookers were moved to tears."

But in spite of the tragic interest now attaching to the suburban Palace of Charlottenburg, as the residence of the new Emperor, it was to the Dom Church in Berlin itself, hard by the Schloss, where all eyes continued to be turned—to the Dom, where the body of the old Emperor had meanwhile been laid out in state. "More touching and sublime by far than the robed and coroneted pomp of Cæsar," as I wrote at the time, "is the simple picture presented by the noble old Kaiser as he lies exposed to the eager gaze of his adoring subjects, awaiting final consignment to the tomb. When I entered the Dom the Emperor's countenance was veiled in gauze, but this was reverentially removed when Prince William arrived to take another look at the well-known features. Long stood the mantled Prince gazing at the shell of the spirit which had passed away, and sad he looked as he left the church again."

And yet, with all his sadness, there was a something in his demeanour as he stalked about among the groups

of officers who had come to lay regimental wreaths at the foot of his grandfather's bier—a something, a *je ne sais quoi*, which struck me as much more imperious than Imperial, a touch almost as of the stage, an anticipation of the authority not yet vested in his person. Nor was this self-consciousness altogether absent from his air when he walked, as the central figure, among the mourning multitude of Sovereigns and Princes who, in the blackest and bitterest of wintry March weather, followed the coffin of his grandfather along the Linden Avenue, through the Brandenburg Thor, with its “*Vale, senex Imperator!*” blazoned up there by the citizens of Berlin, and out through the Thiergarten to the Mausoleum in the palace park of Charlottenburg.

What could have been more pathetic, more tragic, than the spectacle of the funeral *cortège* wending its solemn way through the snow-drifted park, with the death-stricken Emperor Frederick looking on from an upper window in the Palace, because unable to follow the body of his father to the tomb! The Emperor looked down from his elevated position, and acknowledged the many salutes that came from the passing train. *Avete, amici, Cæsar moriturus vos salutat!*

A few days later the Emperor issued a rescript empowering the Crown Prince to dispose, in his father's name, of all such minor matters of government as might be entrusted to him, reserving to himself the decision of more important affairs. Accompanying the proclamation to his people, issued by the new Emperor on arriving in Berlin, was a letter to “my dear

Prince " Bismarck, which ended :—" Not caring for the splendour of great deeds, nor striving for glory, I shall be satisfied if it be one day said of my rule that it was beneficial to my people, useful to my country, and a blessing to the Empire."

But a fortnight had barely elapsed after the publication of this letter when the Emperor Frederick was asked by his consort to give his sanction to something which, in the opinion of the Chancellor, threatened to be the very opposite of a "blessing to the Empire." This was the proposed marriage of the Princess Victoria, second daughter of their Majesties, to Prince Alexander of Battenberg, the ex-Prince of Bulgaria—a match which had even been contemplated several years before (1884)—and on this proposal the Chancellor at once put down his foot in the most emphatic manner. For it seemed to him, for one thing, to involve a breach of one of the conditions under which he had consented to serve the new Emperor. "Several years before he came to the throne," Bismarck afterwards said to a French journalist, "he (the Emperor Frederick) asked me to remain in office on his accession, and I assented on two conditions: that there would be no Parliamentary *régime*" (*i.e.* party government), "and no yielding to foreign" (by which was clearly meant feminine) "influence."

Bismarck had always looked upon the influence which was exercised by the Crown Princess upon her husband as opposed to the true Conservative interests of Prussia, and now he regarded this pet marriage-scheme of hers as little less than insane. Above all things, he thought it would infallibly have the effect of making very bad blood

between Germany and Russia—which latter Power the dying old Emperor had enjoined his grandson to treat with consideration—and further tend to endanger the peace. His manifold objections to the match the Chancellor set forth in a long memorandum on the subject to the Emperor, whom he left in no doubt that the carrying out of the scheme would involve his own retirement from office. But, indeed, he found that the Emperor himself viewed the matter pretty much from his own point of view. “In spite of what people asserted,” said Bismarck afterwards, “I declare that there was complete agreement between the Emperor Frederick and myself, especially in the Battenberg affair.”

But the agreement on the subject between the Chancellor and the Crown Prince William was still closer, and in the circumstances the wish of the son—who, to all appearance, would soon succeed to the throne—was entitled to more consideration than even the will of his mother. In addition to the political reasons which militated against the proposed match, Prince William was believed to entertain strong personal objections to the “Battenberger,” which it would be invidious to discuss. It is certain, at any rate, that in his opposition to the marriage project of the Empress Frederick, the Chancellor had no more hearty supporter than her Majesty’s eldest son; nor can it be doubted that Bismarck’s action in this respect was uppermost in the mind of the Crown Prince when the latter thus toasted the Chancellor on his seventy-third birthday (1st April), which was also his military jubilee :

“Your Serene Highness,—Among all the forty years which you have mentioned, there is probably none so serious and momentous as the present one. The Emperor William, whom you long and faithfully served for twenty-seven years, has departed. The nation enthusiastically acclaims our present Sovereign, who helped to found the Fatherland as it now is. Your Serene Highness, like all of us, will serve him with the same old German fidelity as you showed to the deceased Kaiser. To use a military simile, I may compare our present situation to a regiment which is advancing to storm. The Colonel of the regiment has fallen, and the next in command, though severely wounded, is still riding boldly forward. At this moment all eyes are turned towards the colours, which the bearer is swinging aloft. In this manner, too, your Serene Highness is holding high the banner of the Reich, and it is the sincerest wish of our hearts that you may long be spared to hold high the Imperial standard in company with our beloved and revered Kaiser. God bless and protect him, and your Serene Highness also !”

It required no commentary on this speech to show the world on which side stood the Crown Prince in the “Chancellor crisis” which had thrown all Germany into such a state of controversial commotion. For Bismarck had taken good care that the nation should be timeously apprised of the danger which threatened its interests, in order that he might thus be able to add the pressure of public opinion to the force of his own arguments against the projected marriage. Nevertheless, with the strength of will peculiar to her character, it was only after a hard struggle against all the forces, including her husband and her son, which had thus arrayed themselves against her, that the Empress Frederick at last agreed to “sacrifice her daughter’s happiness on the altar of the Fatherland.”

But if, in the matter of the Battenberg marriage, the Crown Prince failed to see any wisdom in the will of his mother, it is to be feared that, at heart, he was equally opposed to some of the acts of his father. True, it was at this very time that he privately professed himself to be the "first and loyalest subject of his sire"; but this need not have prevented him from sharing the astonishment, the positive dismay, of the Chancellor and all other good Conservatives, on seeing the new Emperor hasten to confer the Black Eagle, the Garter of Prussia, on a man of Semitic descent like Dr. Friedberg, Minister of Justice; the Red Eagle on a Jewish banker in Berlin; and the same decoration on a Radical politician like Professor Virchow. The Crown Prince had his own thoughts about these personal honours, as well as about the dishonour which fell to the share of Herr von Puttkamer, Minister of the Interior; and if he had been free to follow the bent of his own impulses, irrespective of questions of rank and regard for the decencies, it is not to be doubted, from the light of subsequent events, that he would even have attended the valedictory banquet of condolence which the Chancellor offered Puttkamer when the latter was virtually dismissed from office.

But in thus signalling his tragic reign of ninety-nine days by the dismissal of a Conservative Minister, the Emperor Frederick had been guided as much, perhaps, by personal as by political motives. For he could not forgive, much less forget, the fact that when Puttkamer, on the morning of the 9th March, formally announced to the Prussian Chamber the death of the old Emperor-

King, he had committed the atrocious mistake of making no allusion to his successor. In explanation of this most material omission the Minister pleaded that he was as yet unaware of how the new Emperor-King proposed to style himself—whether as Frederick, or as Frederick William.

And, indeed, poor Puttkamer might have been pardoned for his ignorance in this respect, in view of the circumstance that the new Emperor himself apparently did not know how to sign his own name. For the signature to his first proclamation was "Frederick III.," and when it was pointed out that the addition of such a numeral to a Royal autograph was contrary to all monarchical precedent, it was officially explained—for what is more kindly inventive than a courtly wit?—that the error originated with a copyist for the printer, who had mistaken "I.R."—the initial letters of the words "Imperator Rex," written by the new Kaiser after his name—for the Roman numeral "III."!

The truth is that it was a time of painful blunders and misunderstandings all round ; and from these blunders the Crown Prince himself was by no means free. In his particular case the worst of it was that his errors were those of taste and tact. At this time he was commanding a Brigade of the Guards, the drill season was at its height, and the commander of this Brigade took to manœuvring and marching it about in a manner far more ostentatious than necessary. It was not enough for him to put his men through their evolutions on the Tempelhof Field—the Hyde Park, or rather the Wimbledon Common—of the German capital. No ; he must needs also place

himself at the head of his men after each day's work, and with bands playing and colours flying make a sort of triumphal entry into Berlin through a long line of acclaiming streets, and then wind up the show with a final march-past of his troops on the crowded Linden Avenue, with every accessory of stage effect. Here was a Prince, thought many, who had evidently not the least mind to hide his light under a bushel until, at least, the waning flame of his father's life had flickered to its close. With all his filial sorrow, he had already become the artist of attitudes calculated to make him the darling of the streets.

The only pageant at which the Emperor Frederick may be said to have figured—though even here his son was the leading actor—was when, sitting in his victoria one fine May evening in the park at Charlottenburg, he was gratified with a march-past of the Crown Prince's magnificent Brigade. This was the first time that the stricken Emperor had worn his helmet since his accession, and what between its weight and the rush of painful emotions caused by the sight of some of the splendid legions which he had led to victory at Königgrätz, "his head," said Mackenzie, "was bathed in perspiration, though the day was not at all hot."

This the only pageant, did I say, at which the Emperor Frederick figured? No, there was still another, which affected him even more than the sight of the helmeted legions of which he was the moribund master—and that was the wedding of his second son, Prince Henry, to his cousin, Princess Irene of Hesse, in the Palace Chapel of Charlottenburg. "On with the dance, let joy be un-

confined" on my account! was what the noble-hearted Kaiser, wrestling with death, had urged in effect upon his sailor-son; while to his soldier-son he could only at the same time say, or rather write: "*Lerne zu leiden ohne zu klagen*"—"Learn to suffer without complaining, for that is the only thing I can teach you." What a time, to be sure, of excitement and emotion, with all its painful controversies and pathetic contrasts—its Ministerial crises, medical wranglings, and marriage-bells ringing out their merry peals between their mournful tolling for the death of two Emperors. Never before had the web of human life presented such a motley and incongruous aspect.

The strong excitement under which the Emperor Frederick had laboured at the wedding of his sailor-son tended to accelerate his end. "On the next day," wrote his English doctor, "the Emperor showed signs of fatigue and depression, though he did not complain. From this day (25th May) I reckoned the commencement of the final decline in his Majesty's health. He was never so well after Prince Henry's wedding." About a month previously, when Queen Victoria had come to Charlottenburg, on her way home from Florence, to visit her dying son-in-law, the Emperor—then also deeply moved by the presence of her Majesty, to whom he was tenderly attached—declared to his English doctor "he was sure her Majesty's visit had done him much good." The good it did him was probably the knowledge that the Queen, far from suggesting or even supporting it, as was said at the time by the anti-English party, had finally reconciled her daughter to the dropping of the Battenberg match, and otherwise acted as a peacemaker and a

mollifier in the strifeful circles of Berlin; this, too, in a way which made Prince Bismarck declare, after a long interview with the Queen, that "her Majesty was gifted with a statesmanlike wisdom of the highest order."

The Crown Prince, of course, proved himself to be the very pink of personal courtesy towards his royal grandmother; but, at the same time, there was every reason to believe that he was also the heart and soul of what was then called the anti-English party. Shortly before the Queen's arrival at Charlottenburg, the quarrel between the medical attendants of the dying Emperor had reached a pitch—had burst out into open and shameful warfare. Insinuations, and even open attacks, against the Empress Frederick were frequent enough in the Press; and the wonder to many was that her own eldest son, who was already invested with semi-Regency powers, appeared to do nothing of a preventive or defensive kind on her behalf. Certain it is, at any rate, that the Crown Prince felt very bitterly towards the English doctor, who had made a mistaken diagnosis of his father's case yet converted it into such a vociferous means of self-advertisement, just as he was ostentatious in his protection of Mackenzie's chief scientific opponent.

In this respect a little anecdote will tell much. Some time after the death of the Emperor Frederick, a libel case arose in connection with the medical controversy which had raged around his Majesty's death-bed; and Professor von Bergmann was asked whether he would be willing to come over to London, if need be, and give evidence against the plaintiff, Sir M. Mackenzie. On

Bergmann telling the Emperor this, his Majesty exclaimed, "I only wish they would ask *me* to go over!"

Two days after witnessing the march-past of his son's Brigade of Guards, the Emperor Frederick was removed to the new palace at Potsdam, which, as it had been the scene of his birth and of his greatest happiness, he also wished to be the scene of his death. Before leaving for Potsdam the Emperor had visited the Mausoleum where lay the remains of his father, and in a fortnight's time he himself was ready for the tomb. But why dwell on his last days—his last hours—borne with the most heroic courage and Christian resignation? The end came on the 15th June—the anniversary, strange to say, of the death of Prince Frederick Charles, the Emperor's cousin and fellow-commander at Königgrätz. "With his broken-hearted family and several of his devoted servants kneeling round him," said Mackenzie, "Frederick the Noble, breathed his last," and the Crown Prince was now Kaiser William II.

How he received the first acknowledgments of his family and household officers was never told. But one of his first acts of authority, a moment or two after his father had breathed his last, was to give whispered orders to an aide-de-camp. Presently the multitude of mourners at the Palace gates were roused from their sorrowful reverie by the clatter of horses' hoofs, and on looking up they beheld a squadron of the Hussars of the Guard, in their scarlet tunics, rapidly dispersing like the leaves of a fan to take possession of all the points of access to the huge Palace area. The troopers, dismounted, had been waiting at the back of a colonnade

fronting the Schloss, and the Imperial standard had not long been lowered when, at the sharp word of command, they vaulted into their saddles and clattered over the courtyard in the twinkling of an eye. Nor had half-an-hour elapsed from the death of the Emperor before a splendid company of infantry, pouring with perspiration, came up at the double all the way from Potsdam, the ground almost shaking beneath the swift but measured tramp of their feet; and thus the Palace was sealed up hermetically for some time after the Emperor's death, so that neither man nor mouse could go out or in. And the Diary, too, with all its important entries, which the Emperor Frederick had written up to the day almost of his death—*that* could not be removed.

The Emperor William II. had begun his reign by this impressive, not to say ostentatious, display of his military power. In the nation at large this power was circumscribed, by the Constitution alike of Prussia and of the Empire. But he lost not a moment in showing that he was an absolute and irresponsible King in his own castle. Before his mother had recovered from the first transports of her grief, the Palace in which her idolized husband breathed his last had virtually been placed in a state of siege, by her Imperial and imperious son.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE GERMAN CONSTITUTION.

Germany and Prussia—Kaiser William and Duke Alfred—"Kings in their own castles"—The meaning of "German Emperor"—*Primus inter pares*—William II.'s Civil List—Not an irresponsible autocrat—The Imperial army—A constitutional sovereign—Landtag and Reichstag—The Federal Council—The Kaiser its executive officer—Kaiser and King—*Landesvater* and *Vaterland*—*Staatenbund* and *Bundesstaat*—Home Rule in Germany—The Imperial Parliament—Disadvantages of a written Constitution—Parliamentary but not party government—"To the German people."

I HAVE said that though William II. at once showed that he meant to be king in his own castle, his power outside its walls was limited by the Constitution, as well of Prussia as of the Empire; and so this seems to be the proper stage for considering what sort of limitation that was. What is the nature of the two Governments of which William II. had now respectively become the head and the figure-head?

The succession of the Duke of Edinburgh to the throne of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha revealed the fact that the loosest and most inaccurate notions prevailed in England, even among Members of Parliament, with regard to the Constitution of the German Empire and its component States. Several speakers and writers asked whether it was possible for an Englishman, meaning Duke Alfred, who had "taken an oath of allegiance to a foreign

Sovereign" (the Emperor), to retain his status as a British subject. These questions indicated a belief on the part of their framers that, on ascending the throne of his uncle, Duke Alfred had actually, so to speak, bent the vassal knee to his nephew, the German Emperor, as to his suzerain lord.

But a more erroneous and absurd belief never impressed itself upon the mind of man. It probably arose from the circumstance that, when Duke Alfred swore to observe and defend the Constitution of the united Duchies of Coburg and Gotha, he did so in the accidental presence of the Emperor, who, out of a mere feeling of kinship and sovereign *camaraderie* for his English uncle, had hastened to Rheinhardtsbrunn to act towards him as a kind of sponsor and Dymoke champion, so to speak, at such a serious juncture of his life. That was all. Otherwise Duke Alfred took no further oath of allegiance to the Emperor, or to the Empire, than was implied in his vow to observe his own Ducal Constitution—an act in itself which at once admitted him to the confederation of his fellow-Sovereigns.

What then were the political relations thus established between uncle and nephew, Duke and Kaiser? The answer is that they were relations of the most perfect sovereign parity. Within the limits of his own dominions in the new Germanic Confederation called Empire, the Duke of Coburg is as independent a Sovereign as the King of Prussia—neither more nor less. Titularly, one is a King and the other a Duke. But both are Sovereigns of the constitutional kind, nor can the Kaiser-King dictate to or override the Duke in the very smallest

degree. At Court ceremonies the King, as being of higher rank, would naturally take precedence over the Duke, but both are equally "Kings in their own castles," and within the limits of their own Constitutions. The same remark applies also to the other five-and-twenty Sovereign States and Free Cities which, in their confederated entirety, constitute the German Empire.

The relations of all these States to the Empire—of the parts to the whole—may be best explained by considering briefly the character and powers of the Empire's head. And first let it be remembered that the "German Emperor" (for he is not "Emperor of Germany," in the loose parlance of the newspapers) is by no means an Emperor in the sense that Tiberius or Napoleon was one. As King of Prussia, he is merely the *ex-officio* President of the Germanic corporation of States, with the title "Deutsche Kaiser"; and, again, as such Imperial President, he is nothing more than the executive officer of the will (based on a majority of votes) of his fellow-Sovereigns. Among these he is *primus inter pares*; but, *quâ* Emperor, he enjoys and can exercise little or no power which is not previously conferred upon him by the suffrages of his confederates.

As Kaiser, he does not draw one single penny from the Imperial Exchequer, though the Imperial dignity entailed upon the Prussian Crown an additional outlay so great that, soon after the accession of William II., three and a half million marks had to be added to his civil list, thus raising it to the respectable figure of nearly sixteen million marks, say £800,000. The Imperial dignity is, therefore, an honorary title in the strictest sense of the term, but the

cost of maintaining it is cheerfully borne by the Emperor-King's special subjects for the honour of the family, so to speak, *et pour les beaux yeux du roi de Prusse*.

One frequently hears public writers and speakers refer to the Emperor as a "military autocrat," possessing irresponsible powers only a little less absolute than those of the Tsar. As a matter of positive fact the German Emperor is very much less of an "irresponsible autocrat" than is Mr. John Burns. It may equally surprise and tranquilise many to hear that the German Emperor does *not*, like the Tsar, hold the issues of war and peace in the hollow of his own hand, and that he *cannot* declare an aggressive war without the previous assent of his fellow-Sovereigns in the Fatherland. True, if war be suddenly declared *against* Germany, he may then sound the assembly without the loss of time that would be incurred by his first summoning a meeting of the Federal Council—which is the body that represents the confederated Sovereigns—in order to ask for leave to defend the Fatherland. But, otherwise, the Emperor is tied hand and foot with respect to the initial movements of the Army of which he is the supreme commander, or "War-Lord."

And then a word on the constitution of this Imperial host (now comprising twenty Army Corps) will further facilitate comprehension of the political structure of the Reich. For administrative purposes this Army is Imperial, but not organically. There is no such official as a "German Minister of War." The sole responsible Minister of the Reich is the Chancellor, who has to countersign all the political acts of the Imperial Executive. But the chief component States have their

own War Ministers, who have to answer for the proper contingent of troops contributable by them, in proportion to their respective populations, to the Imperial host ; and though the Prussian Minister of War really acts as a kind of Imperial official in this respect, still the Emperor, while paramount as to internal organisation and appointments in the field of his own Prussian contingent (about two-thirds of the whole), has little more, in time of peace, than mere powers of inspection over the other military quotas, especially in South Germany. In war he takes the supreme command of all, as Executive Officer of the Confederation.

In the political field, too, his functions are analogous, though here he is still very much less of an "autocrat" even than in the military domain. For, on one hand, his perfect freedom of action is limited by the Federal Council, or representative board of his fellow-Sovereigns ; while on the other he has restraining weights attached to both his feet in the shape of the Prussian and the Imperial Parliaments—the Landtag and the Reichstag. The Legislative Body of the Empire may be said to consist of two Chambers, with no sovereign or presidential power of veto over them—the Reichstag, or National Assembly, and the Bundesrath, or Federal Council. The former is returned by the German people on the principle of universal suffrage ; the latter is composed of personal delegates, or "plenipotentiaries," as they are called, of the Federal Sovereigns. Each of these Chambers has co-ordinate and co-equal powers. The assent of both is necessary to the passing of an Imperial law, and any bill would be blocked by the veto power of either.

Apart from these two Chambers, the Emperor himself has no power whatever to veto an Imperial law ; and, as Prussian member of the Federal Council, he can only, in that body, command seventeen votes out of a total of fifty-two. It will thus appear that, even in the Council of German Sovereigns, their President might easily be outvoted on any question. The combined "noes" of Bavaria, Saxony, Wurtemberg, and Baden, would in themselves suffice to countervail the "ayes" of Prussia ; while the same result might be achieved by a suffragal coalition of all the minor States, with their one vote each. A bill which is passed by the Reichstag, and receives the sanction of the Federal Council, becomes law, whether Prussia has voted with the majority of the other States or not ; and the Emperor-King himself has no separate power of doing anything, no choice but execute the decision of his fellow-Sovereigns. Indeed, it has repeatedly happened that, as executive officer of the Federal Council, he has had to promulgate laws which, as King of Prussia, he had previously opposed.

The King of Prussia is only a type of all his co-rulers in the Fatherland. With the exception of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, where the feudal spirit survives in greatest vigour, and where the old representative system of "Estates" still prevails, every German State, large or small, enjoys its Constitution and its Chambers—the fruit, mainly, of the revolutionary era of 1848 ; and every ruler of such a State—be his title King, Prince, Grand Duke, or Duke—is every bit as much of a sovereign within his own domains as the King of Prussia is within the monarchy of the Hohenzollerns.

In this country the tendency ever is to lose sight of the King of Prussia in the German Emperor ; and until the distinction is clearly grasped, no one can hope to avoid confusion of thought in following the course of things in the Fatherland. People should always ask themselves, on hearing that his Majesty has said or done this or that, whether he has been acting as Kaiser, or only as King, and in about seven cases out of ten they will find, to their great surprise perhaps, that it was in the latter capacity.

As King of Prussia, William II. has far more power than as German Kaiser ; but in this respect he is only a type, *ceteris paribus*, of his federal allies. For, like him, the Grand Duke of Hesse, or the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, can veto laws passed by his own Chamber which he does not approve. He can confer decorations and titles of nobility, hold a Court, nominate a Cabinet, and perform all the other symbolic acts of sovereignty.

Each of these Federal Sovereigns is still a *Landesvater* to his particular subjects ; and the feeling of personal loyalty, which still attaches all Germans to their special *Landesvater*, takes undoubted precedence of their other sense of allegiance to the Emperor as political overseer of the whole *Vaterland*. It was, indeed, long before the old Emperor could accustom himself either to the sound or to the sense of his new title ; and to the very last he preferred to hear those about him refer to him as "*der König*." In the minor States the same amount of veneration continues to be felt for the traditional title of *Gross-Herzog* or *Herzog* ; and in spite of the progress made by modern ideas of the democratic kind among certain strata of the German

masses, the monarchical feeling of the Fatherland as a whole is still intensely strong.

In the old days—that is to say, before the extrusion of Austria by the nationalist policy of Bismarck led to the reconstruction of the Fatherland—the political system of Germany was what was called a *Staatenbund*, or bundle of States loosely tied together with red tape for the common purposes of defence. But after Königgrätz, and more particularly after Sedan and Versailles, this *Staatenbund* became converted into a *Bundesstaat*, or Federalised State. The difference between the two may be more clearly explained thus. During the *Staatenbund* period there was little or no central power, especially of the legislative kind, each State making laws for itself irrespective of the aims and interests of the others. But the *Bundesstaat* was based on the fact that each separate State voluntarily parted with a good deal of its legislative sovereignty to a central body invested with the power of making laws, in certain specified fields, for the good of the entire confederated nation.

Whereas in England it is proposed, by the advocates of Home Rule, to decentralise legislation by the creation of separate Parliaments for the transaction of local business, Germany has attained to her present condition by something like the reverse process. All the Home Rule assemblies in Germany did not proceed from, but preceded, the Imperial Parliament. They were all in existence before the creation of the Empire, and all they did was to surrender some of their law-making powers to the Legislature of the Reich. The rest of these powers they retained, and continue to exercise in as full and

independent a manner as ever. Prussia, Saxony, Bavaria, Baden, Würtemberg, and all the other little sovereignties of Germany, forming in their totality the confederation called the German Empire—each has its Landtag, or separate State Assembly, generally consisting of two Chambers after the Belgian or Prussian model, with the King, Grand Duke, or Duke, as the third effective factor in the Legislature; and each of these Diets is entitled to legislate on all local matters as before, *minus* the affairs that were, by common consent, in 1871, handed over to the care of the Imperial Parliament.

And now for a word or two as to this body. It is not to be expected that a Legislature like that of the Empire, which has only been in existence for about five-and-twenty years, should bear very much resemblance to the Parliament of England, with its perfecting practice of centuries. For how can the youngest child of a family compare in strength and spirit with its time-tempered sire? And how, moreover, can a child which is tightly wrapped up in the swaddling-bands and leading-strings of a *written* Constitution, develop its limbs so fast as a youngster who is free to roam the fields at will, o'erleaping the fences of royal prerogative, and encroaching, by the most imperceptible degrees, on the privilege-preserves of the Crown? Unfortunate, comparatively speaking, are the people who have a written charter, or signed agreement between them and their rulers. For the line which separates the sea from the shore may change, and the water may in time usurp the place of the land, but the black-and-white rights and liberties of a Constitution-clad nation make no more progress in growth than the feet of the boot-cramped Chinese.

And where shall you look for a bench of Ministers who are the product of any particular majority in Parliament? Nowhere; for the Kaiser-King is entitled to appoint his Ministers as the exclusive instruments of his policy and will, apart altogether from the chance predominance of this or that party. Bismarck always managed to create majorities; but majorities could never create a Bismarck, much less an anti-Bismarck. Germany is a country which has a kind of Parliamentary *régime*, but not by any means a party system of Government; and perhaps this is not an unmixed evil. Nay, all things considered, it must be regarded as a positive blessing for a country which is, and promises to remain, in the position of a besieged fortress, and which must therefore set higher store on an efficient and undiminished Army, than on an eloquence-eaten and demagogue-driven Assembly.

But, with all its necessary limitations and inevitable shortcomings, the German Parliament—which, like its sister Legislature of Prussia, is now elected for five instead of three years as before—has made itself a famous historic body within the comparatively brief period of its existence. It has done splendid service to the united Fatherland, and been the scene of many a stirring and memorable incident. It has already passed out of its nonage; and the strength, dignity, and wisdom of its manhood received becoming investiture when, in 1894, it removed from its dingy place of meeting in the Leipziger Strasse to the magnificent structure, the finest in all Berlin, which graces the garden-like Königplatz, inscribed “To the German people.”

CHAPTER V.

FIRST FLIGHTS.

Addresses to the Army and Navy—War-Lord and Peace-Lord—Homaging instead of Coronation—Opening of the Reichstag—First servant of the State—Personal characteristics—In collision with Queen Natalie—A modern *Prinzenraub*—Visit to St. Petersburg—Alexander III. and William II.—Visit to Stockholm and Copenhagen—The Danes and the Treaty of Prague—With Bismarck at Friedrichsruh—"Not an inch of our soil, nor a stone of our fortresses!"—Resignation of Moltke—Rejuvenating the services—General von Caprivi, a soldier-sailor—Count Waldersee—At the South German Courts—At Vienna—At Rome—The Holy Roman Empire—Past and present—The Kaiser as "King of Rome"—The Emperor and the Pope—A painful incident—"Questo grovino"—The Emperor and the Press—A cutting reprimand—Crown Prince's Diary and Dr. Geffcken—Astounding revelations—A Kaiser "Toom-Tabard"—Father and son—Sir R. Morier and the Empress Frederick—"Alien Hands and Co-Rulers in Germany"—Morier and the Bismarcks—Emperor's attitude to controversy—Family estrangements.

IT was characteristic of the two men that whereas Frederick III., on succeeding to the throne, issued his first proclamation to "his people," and the next to his Army, his son simply reversed this order of address, and, in his own words of burning devotion, spoke primarily to his Army, and then to his Navy. It was his "people in arms" he first thought of, and after that his citizen subjects. His father had aimed at being a "citizen king"; he, on the contrary, meant above all things to be a

"soldier sovereign." "Thus we belong to each other, I and the Army," said the new Emperor in his General Order, after expatiating in the most exalted terms on the past relationship between the lieges and their "War Lords." "Thus we are born for one another, and thus we will stand together in an indissoluble bond in peace or storm, as God may will it. You will now take to me the oath of fidelity and obedience, and I swear ever to remember that the eyes of my ancestors look down upon me from the other world, and that I shall one day have to render account to them of the glory and honour of the Army." To the sister arm a similar assurance was addressed.

These stirring appeals of the German War-Lord to his "*Volk in Waffen*" were issued on the day of his father's death. But the non-uniformed portion of his people had to wait three days longer for a sign from what, by contrast, might be called their Peace-Lord, or until his father had been laid to rest in the Friedenskirche at Potsdam, on the double anniversary of Kolin and Waterloo—days at once of disaster and of glory in the Prussian annals.

A week later their Imperial Majesties made their state entry into Berlin, and next day (25th June) William II., now only in his twenty-ninth year, opened the Reichstag in circumstances of pomp which practically amounted to his coronation. In view of the costly journeys by land and sea, with all their inevitable scatterings of largesse, which the new Monarch was already contemplating, he had decided to forego the very tempting, but very expensive, ceremony of a Royal coronation at Königsberg, the Westminster of Prussia. But for this ceremonious

placing of the crown upon his head, with his own hands, in token of his claim to rule by right divine, he beheld a satisfactory enough substitute in an assemblage of his fellow-sovereigns who should acclaim him as Kaiser, and thus set the seal upon his succession to the throne of Prussia. There never was, as there never could have been, any question of his coronation as German Emperor, only as King of Prussia. But his formal recognition, or *Huldigung* (homaging), as Kaiser by his Federal Allies implied, of course, the previous acknowledgment of his Royal Prussian rank, and that would be enough.

It was agreed by all who witnessed the two events that, since the proclamation of the German Empire in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, no state ceremony of political import had ever been held with greater pomp and circumstance than the opening of his first Imperial Parliament by Kaiser Wilhelm II., in the White Saloon, or throne-room, of the Old Schloss. The first German Reichstag, it is true, had met in somewhat similar circumstances of outward form, soon after the great war which gave it birth; but this other function had a character of its own, due to the personal and political considerations connected with William II.'s accession to the throne. The ceremony in the Hall of Mirrors symbolized the perfect attainment of German unity, while the impressive gathering of June, 1888, was devised to demonstrate to the world at large that, in spite of the demise of a couple of Emperors, German unity was still the solid and abiding fact which formed the corner-stone of the European system of nations. Round the person of their new and youthful

chief most of the German Sovereigns rallied to listen with approval, while he solemnly proclaimed to the chosen representatives of the German people the lines on which he proposed to walk. Briefly described, these lines were simply to be those by the following of which the Emperor's grandfather "had won the confidence of his allies, the love of the German people, and the goodwill of foreign countries."

Two days later the Emperor-King opened the Prussian Diet in circumstances of similar pomp, when he took the oath to the Constitution, and declared, amid a storm of applause, that the guiding principle of his reign would be the maxim of Frederick the Great—that the King of Prussia was but the first servant of the State. At the same time, while he had no desire to curtail popular rights, as guaranteed by the Constitution, he was firmly resolved to maintain intact and guard from all encroachment the chartered prerogatives of the Crown—a declaration which was accentuated by a louder and more decided tone of voice, that could leave no doubt as to his meaning.

Nothing could have been more reassuring than all these professions of faith and promises on the part of the new monarch, and criticism could find less to say about His Majesty's matter than his manner. For it was agreed that, on the whole, this latter was, perhaps, a trifle more imperious than imperial. His voice was harsh and jerky, while his delivery was more suggestive of a stern address to a battalion than of a gracious allocution to a body of legislators. To some, it seemed that his idea of looking dignified was simply to look dour, and

there was a self-consciousness about his air and manner at variance with a sense of perfect ease. His repose was much too rigid, and lacking in that "cheerful semblance and sweet majesty" which shed a far more attractive lustre on a royal countenance than the sparkling jewels of a crown. While possessing many of his mother's qualities, he had failed to inherit the ruddy, healthful complexion of the Guelphs, or even of the Hohenzollerns, and the seriousness of his face was intensified by its sallowness. But whenever his face broke into a gracious smile, it assumed a most striking resemblance to that of the Emperor's uncle, the Duke of Connaught.

His Majesty stood about five feet nine, and his figure, on the whole, was one which required a good deal of dressing to bring it up to the imperial level. For, while sturdy enough, this figure was by no means statuesque, and it was less suggestive of elegance than of energy. But this latter quality permeated the Emperor's whole appearance in a very striking manner. His head and face were handsomer than his figure, and expressed a keen intelligence, if not, perhaps, a high intellectuality. But the dominant expression of his features was one of great, almost grim determination and force of character—qualities far rarer and more valuable than mere amplitude of mind. William I. had possessed great force of character, with but little mental power; Frederick III. had possessed some mental power, with but little force of character; while William II., it was abundantly clear, had been gifted with such a striking combination of both mind and will as had distinguished no occupant of the

Prussian throne since it was vacated by Frederick the Great.

This was not only the opinion of those who now carefully watched the Emperor's first appearances, and listened to his speeches. It was also the conviction of those who had enjoyed special opportunities of gauging His Majesty's character: of Bismarck, who had said that the young Emperor was able enough to be his own Chancellor; of Moltke, who prophesied for His Majesty a glorious reign; of Prince Antony of Hohenzollern, who had said of him that he would yet take a foremost place among his fellow-Sovereigns, and become the talk of Europe; and of Count Douglas—a Thirty Years' War descendant of the Drumlanrig branch of his house—who was really the first to draw something like a true character-sketch of His Majesty, and tell the Germans with what a hopeful and illustrious young Kaiser they had now been blessed.

Above all things he was a young monarch who evidently knew his own mind, and had a most inflexible will—a will which would not even yield to the wishes and authority of his mother. It was this conflict of two very strong wills which produced the painful family estrangement that marked the young Emperor's accession to the throne; and, curiously enough, one of his very first acts in the field of international relations also brought His Majesty into sharp, almost unseemly collision with another woman. This was Queen Natalie of Servia, whose conjugal squabbles had led her to retire to Wiesbaden out of the range of her husband's persecuting fire, carrying with her the twelve-year-old heir to the Crown as a kind of hostage

for the good behaviour of his sire. Hereupon King Milan applied to the Prussian Government for the restitution of his son, while at the same time Queen Natalie appealed for the personal protection of the Emperor. His Majesty hastened to reply to the royal suppliant that, as long as she sojourned within his Prussian dominions, she might count on all the harbourage that was consistent with his international obligations to her august Consort, and that meanwhile he would inquire into the facts of the case.

Having done this, he telegraphed again to express his great regret at his inability to back up Her Majesty in her opposition to the just demand of her husband for the restitution of his son, and "recommended" her to "place the Crown Prince at the disposal of the King, his father." But this the Queen doggedly declined to do, so that at last the Prefect of Police had to appear before her in full uniform with the intimation that, if her recalcitrant Majesty would not yield to reason, she would have to succumb to force. Meanwhile, the Queen's villa was sealed up by a vigilant cordon of police, and next day the Prefect himself returned, possessed himself of the boy's person and drove with him to the station, where he handed him over to the Servian Minister, Protitch, and a couple of King Milan's officers, who at once whisked him off to Belgrade.

His mother, on the other hand, hastened to seek a new and better asylum in Paris, where the journals at once began to draw pointed comparisons between the "brutality of the Prussian authorities" and the "chivalrous hospitality of France." Whether the forcible

restitution of the Servian Prince had been enjoined upon the Prussian King by the positive obligations of international law or custom, is a question that was keenly debated at the time from antagonistic points of view. But that the *Prinzenraub*, at least, made no indelible impression of wrong-suffering on the heart of Queen Natalie herself, may be inferred, perhaps, from the fact that her portrait—evidently the gift of Her Majesty—subsequently came to form the most conspicuous ornament in the cabin of the Emperor's sailing yacht, "Meteor."

Fresh from his collision with Queen Natalie, the Emperor started off to visit the Court of St Petersburg, the very Court which had most reason to sympathise with the Servian Queen's troubles, seeing that she had mainly come to grief with her Austrian-minded spouse by constituting herself the life and soul of the Russian party at Belgrade. On his death-bed, as may be remembered, the old Kaiser had enjoined upon his grandson the sacred duty of constant consideration towards Russia. But no one ever expected that his grandson would rush away to pay his respects at St. Petersburg before he had been a month upon the throne. Another monarch, perhaps, would have waited until the subsidence of his profound sorrow for the double loss of a dearly-beloved grandfather and father had fitted him to exchange a look of mourning for a look of mirth. But monarchs may not be as other men, and William II. evidently regarded it as imperative to subordinate his private grief to his public duty. To do this must cost anyone a painful wrench, but it was an effort to which the ever-

resolute and resourceful young Kaiser proved to be fully equal.

On the 18th June, he had formed the central figure in what was, perhaps, one of the very saddest pageants of funeral woe on which the sun had ever looked; and already, on July 19th, he gaily steamed into the flag-bedecked and craft-encumbered waters of Cronstadt, and took his stand on the bridge of the *Hohenzollern* (with a marine painter at his side to memorialize for him the festive scene) as the smiling anticipant of all the official honours that were in store for him—the thundered welcome from fifty Russian ships of war, the Slavonic huzzahs of holiday-multitudes (who take their cue from their rulers), the gorgeous banquets and health-drinkings at Peterhof, and, above all things, the grand military parade at Krasnoe Selo, which had been devised to gratify the youthful Kaiser's well-known passion for the sight of soldiers.

There is nothing in the world more deceptive than the dazzling circumstances of such sovereign visits. For their private meaning rarely corresponds with their public character; and it is to be feared that, in the present case, this private discrepancy was of an exceptionally marked kind. Nature had made it impossible for the two Emperors to become mutual admirers, even if the interests of their respective States prescribed for them a relationship of political amity. Personally, Alexander III. and William II. had little in common but devotion to the cause of peace and the doctrine of divine right. The Tsar was slow, heavy, morbid, unimaginative, mute—the dumb ruler of a voiceless people; while the

youthful Kaiser was quick, fiery, energetic, eloquent, and altogether original. The Emperor of Russia was comparatively ignorant, ill-educated, and narrow-minded; whereas his fellow-Sovereign of Germany represented the very highwatermark of Western culture and enlightenment. Alexander was mediæval, William intensely modern. One was retrograde, the other progressive; the Kaiser had a consuming passion for soldiering and show, and these things the Tsar simply detested.

The former could not have been long at Peterhof without impressing his imperial host with a painful sense of his intellectual inferiority. The Tsar glimmered afar off in the firmament of Sovereigns like a fixed star—large but not luminous; while the Kaiser swept down upon him like a portentous comet. Alexander lived in perpetual terror of his life, while the heart of William was open to no fear, as he frequently boasted, but the fear of God. "*Noli turbare circulos meos*" was the motto of the Moujik-Tsar; and never could he have felt more fluttered—more annoyed, perhaps, than when his circles were so suddenly invaded by a month-old monarch bubbling over with all kinds of new ideas, and burning with an ostentatious, an almost aggressive, ambition to figure as a tail-of-the-century Saviour of Society.

It was impossible to imagine a more striking contrast than that which was presented by the characters of Alexander III. and his guest, William II. But what they thought of one another they never said, or only in confidence which was never betrayed. It is thus that silence often suggests the existence of personal beliefs that were never held. But amid all the misleading flatteries

of his five days' stay at Peterhof the young Emperor managed to display his exceptional powers of penetration, as well as his quite exceptional courage; and of this latter quality he gave another signal proof, by markedly omitting from the list of those high dignitaries on whom he conferred his decorations the name of General Obrutcheff, Chief of the Grand General Staff, who had never taken pains to conceal his intense hatred of everything German.

From Peterhof the Emperor flashed across the sea to Stockholm, where another most effusive reception awaited him, and where, at the banqueting-board of the King, there was much enthusiastic talk about the bonds of race and of common interest which had always united, and always would unite, the Swedish and the German peoples. It was just before driving to the Riddarholm Kirke, to worship at the trophy-cumbered shrines of the Great Gustavus and of Charles Douze, that the Emperor received the news of the birth of his fifth son, and in honour of his royal entertainer he resolved to call him Oscar.

But at Copenhagen, to which the Kaiser next directed his darting vessel's head, his public welcome was considerably cooler than at Stockholm, for the cheers of the multitude were mingled with some much less flattering sounds. The Danes had not yet forgiven—much less forgotten—the events of 1864; and in particular they remembered that the article of the Treaty of Prague (1866), which contemplated a *plébiscite* for the North Schleswigers to determine whether they should belong to Prussia or to Denmark, had never been carried out—for

the very simple reason that it had been abrogated by mutual consent between Austria and Prussia in 1878, in consideration of the way in which Bismarck, at the Congress of Berlin, had supported Count Andrassy's policy of occupation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In these circumstances it was another very considerable act of courage on the part of the Emperor to present himself at Copenhagen; but he left that capital well satisfied, on the whole, with the results of his visit. This had been a visit at once of compliment and conciliation, for the Emperor regarded it as one of his most sacred duties to clear up all the accounts, all the public and private quarrels, of which he found any record in his inherited papers.

Thus, within less than a fortnight, his Majesty had made the round of all his fellow-Sovereigns in the North—of all but one, and he the most powerful of them all. This was none other than Bismarck, the Sovereign of the Sachsenwald, and to his rural court at Friedrichsruh the Emperor now respectfully repaired. As he had slept a night at Copenhagen, the very least he could do was to sleep a night at Friedrichsruh; and it is only a thousand pities that, on this occasion, stone walls were not endowed with a sense of hearing, that they might thus have been able to repeat the interesting confidences which the home-returning Emperor now poured into the attentive ear of his Chancellor. The two were photographed together in front of the château, and the expression on both their faces was one of boundless satisfaction with one another—mutual admiration of the warmest kind.

On the part of Bismarck this admiration grew more fervid still about a fortnight later, when his Imperial pupil

went to Frankfort-on-the-Oder to unveil, on the anniversary of Mars-la-Tour, a monument to the memory of Prince Frederick Charles, the hero of that glorious fight. Previous to this, the Press had been discussing the North-Schleswig question, as revived by the Emperor's visit to Copenhagen; and even one journal, rightly or wrongly, represented the Prince of Wales (who had married a daughter of Denmark) as having said that, if his brother-in-law, the Emperor Frederick, had only lived a little longer, this question might have been finally settled to the satisfaction of the Danes, by the retrocession—it was, of course, implied—of a portion of their previous territory. The same Emperor, it was further stated, might have even felt inclined to pacify the French by giving them back Lorraine. Therefore at the unveiling ceremony above referred to, William II. seized the opportunity to denounce all such statements as a gross calumny on the memory and character of his father, and to declare that “we would rather leave our united eighteen Army Corps, and our forty-two millions of inhabitants, lying on the field of battle than relinquish one single stone of what was won by my father and Prince Frederick Charles.”

“Not an inch of our soil, nor a stone of our fortresses !” Jules Favre had fiercely shouted out to the advancing Germans after Sedan, and the German Kaiser himself had now appropriated the cry. His words at the time resounded throughout all Europe like the rattling of a sword, though they certainly savoured less of defiance than of defence. But in speaking as he did, William II. undoubtedly expressed the sentiments of the entire

Fatherland. He had uttered a much-needed word of warning to the French as well as to the Danes, and the resoluteness of his tone was all the more remarkable in view of the fact that the German Army had just lost the services of the man who was more than an Army in himself.

"I feel bound to tell your Majesty," Moltke had written on the return of the Emperor from his northern tour, "that, at my great age, I am no longer able to mount a horse. Your Majesty requires younger men, and can no longer be served by a Chief of the General Staff who is incapable of taking the field." Within a week of this, though "with a heavy heart," the young Emperor had resolved to accept the Field-Marshal's resignation of a post "at which you have written your name high on the glory-tablets of the Prussian Army, and made it famous throughout the whole world." Yet, while relieving the great "battle-thinker" of his onerous duties as the "brain of the Army," his Majesty insisted on appointing him President of the National Defence Commission, "since I cannot dispense with your advice so long as you live, and I must preserve you to the Army, which has always looked up to you with unbounded confidence. . . . In respect to your future appointments, I have instructed the Minister of War to continue paying you your former salary, and have also given orders that you are to retain your official residence"—with other honours and compliments of the most gracious kind.

It was quite true, as the nearly nonagenarian Moltke himself had urged, that he was no longer able to mount a horse and take the field; but the initiative to his resignation came from himself. Yet it had probably been

suggested to him by the Emperor, who was no sooner seated on the throne than he began to reform the Army with more than the proverbial thoroughness of the new broom. Old and incompetent officers were mercilessly weeded out, resignations came pouring in, and the process of "rejuvenating" the two branches of the service went on at a most vigorous rate. From this process, more perhaps than from anything else, it was abundantly clear that the will of the new Emperor was just as strong as his views were decided. *Se soumettre ou se démettre* was the ultimatum conveyed to all his Majesty's servants, of whatever branch or grade.

Among those who hastened to resign (within a fortnight of the Emperor's accession) was General von Caprivi, Chief of the Admiralty. The soldier Caprivi had done much during his tenure of a sailor's office. For he it was who had instituted "training squadrons," and also provided Germany with a larger and finer flotilla of torpedo-boats than belonged to any other naval Power, his idea being that the German Fleet should be so constructed as to subserve the purposes of coast defence more than those of distant aggression. But the young Emperor—being bitten by the colonial idea, and big with the ambition to make Germany a *Weltmacht*, as well as a dreaded European Power—did not altogether share this view; and accordingly he hastened to transfer Caprivi, "one of the most distinguished Generals in my Army," from the care of the Admiralty to the command of the 10th (Hanoverian) Army Corps.

In other respects, too, the naval, military, ministerial, diplomatic, and household packs underwent a thorough

shuffling; and then, after thus completing the deal, and also showing the Army and its new Chief of the Staff, Count von Waldersee,* by his daring manipulation of an Army Corps in the field, what a capable commander their new "War-Lord" could be—in time of peace, at least—his Majesty once more left his astonished subjects to ruminate over the impressions which they had gathered of his character, and started off on another extended tour of foreign travel.

This time it was the Courts of his Allies—as well in the Fatherland, as in the field of the Triple Alliance—which attracted his visit. And first of all—after hunting the red deer and the tusky boar with the Prince of Lippe-Detmold in the classic glades of the Teutoburger Wald, and revelling in the proud memories of "Hermann the German," who annihilated the overweening legions of Varus—the Emperor went to Stuttgart and Munich; and in each of these capitals, where he was received with immense enthusiasm, his Majesty's perfervid speeches were equally full of historical erudition and pat allusions. The Wurtembergers he flattered by reminding them of the Swabian blood which rolled in his veins; while with the "brave Bavarians" and their ruling house of

* Count Waldersee only remained Chief of the Staff till February, 1891, when he was succeeded by Count Schlieffen—another proof that the Emperor meant to make his will paramount in all things. There certainly had been official friction of some kind between his Majesty and Waldersee, who was now given the command of the 9th Army Corps (Schleswig-Holstein)—"which, in virtue of its relation to the native province of her Majesty, the Empress-Queen, my much-loved Consort, is especially dear to me"—with the further assurance that "I have selected you to lead a (whole) Army in case of war." In 1895 Waldersee was made a Field-Marshal.

Wittelsbach, which had invited his grandfather to assume the Imperial crown, he would for ever stand shoulder to shoulder, with true Hohenzollern loyalty, in days no less of weal than of national woe.

On the way from Stuttgart to Munich, the Emperor had paid his respects to his grand-ducal uncle and aunt of Baden, on the Island of Mainau in the Lake of Constance, which had been made to look like a fairy scene in his honour; and here he received the homage of the dispossessed Duke of Nassau, who thus expressed his final acquiescence in the accomplished facts of 1866. The Duke's only daughter had been previously married to the Emperor's cousin, the hereditary Grand Duke of Baden, and this personal union had paved the way for the political reconciliation which was now complete—a result the more significant as the Duke was heir-apparent to the throne of Luxemburg.

From Munich the Emperor, more than ever avid of such attentions, now sped on to Vienna, there to revel in the honours that awaited him alike from monarch and from multitude, and to set his seal afresh on the Austrian Alliance.* Indeed, the toasts which crowned the banquet at the Hofburg constituted a kind of renewal of this defensive pact. Francis Joseph drank to his august ally “with those feelings of cordial, faithful, and inextinguishable friendship and alliance which unite us

* In his first speech from the Throne, the Emperor had declared that he would adhere to the Austrian alliance “with German fidelity, not only because it had been concluded, but because he also saw in this defensive compact a basis of European equilibrium as well as an inheritance from German history, the purport of which was now sanctioned by the public opinion of the whole German people.”

to the welfare of our people"; while William replied that, in coming to Vienna, he had only been true to the sacred inheritance derived from his grandfather; and the ceremony of treaty-renewal was completed by the two monarchs toasting their respective Armies, Francis Joseph referring to that of Prussia (with a smothered sigh, perhaps, as he thought of Sadowa) as a most shining pattern of all military virtues.

On Count Kalnoky—who now championed the defensive treaty which his predecessor, Count Andrassy, had concluded—as well as on the Hungarian Premier, Tisza, a cordial advocate of the Alliance, the Kaiser now conferred the Black Eagle as a signal proof of his esteem. But the sun of his Majesty's favour shone not equally—shone not at all on the Austrian Premier, Count Taaffe, whose policy tended to set the Tsechs over the German element in the Dual Monarchy—an emphatic and courageous young Kaiser, who had no gracious smile, no high decorations for anti-Teutonic Obrutcheffs and Taafes, even when figuring prominently in the suites of their respective Sovereigns.

At Vienna the Emperor's reception had been of the most friendly and flattering kind, but it was nothing to the enthusiastic welcome which awaited him at Rome, to which he now repaired like a second Barbarossa bursting over the Alps. Formerly the German Emperors had journeyed to Rome to complete their sovereign title by being crowned as Roman King; and here again was the modern representative of the mediæval Kaisers touring to the Eternal City for very much the same purpose, practically the same object under a different

form. It is truly astonishing to note how the spirit and substance of the past survive in the altered shapes of the present. For the area of the Triple Alliance between Germany, Austria, and Italy coincides in a most remarkable manner with the territory of the old Holy Roman Empire, as Bismarck pointed out when addressing a Styrian deputation on the occasion of his eightieth birthday.

The Triple Alliance had now taken the place of the old Holy Roman Empire, and the chief member and champion of this Alliance repaired to Rome to receive its traditional allegiance to the German Kaiser, not at the hands of the Pope, as of yore, but from the hearts of the Italians. Yet what a change! What a contrast between the travelling methods of the rulers of the Reich which had been founded by Otto the Great, and of the Empire which had been re-founded by Otto the Greater—Otto von Bismarck-Schonhausen, to wit! What a contrast, I say, between the armed arrival of the ancient Kaisers at the Gate of St. Angelo, where their mailed followers must needs encamp outside on the Neronian field, and the steaming in of the modern Emperor straight into the flag-fluttering heart of the Eternal City, with a brilliant retinue of Moltke-trained officers and Bismarck-bred diplomatists!

Formerly the Kaisers had received their crowns from the Italian Pope, but now William II. was accorded his by the Italian people—a crown of political faith and friendship which found expression in the frantic cheers that greeted the Emperor when, at the side of his royal ally, he presented himself on the balcony of the Quirinal

the reception of his Majesty's grand-uncle, Frederick William IV., by Gregory XVI., or his Majesty's father by Pius IX., in 1853. But he—Leo XIII.—was now a prisoner in the Vatican, and could not even return his Majesty's visit. Was this not a most deplorable state of things for the Vicar of Christ? Who was to blame for that, if not the King of Italy, who had wantonly denuded him of the last vestige of his temporal power?

The Emperor sought to soothe the Holy Father's feelings in this respect by expatiating on the brilliant prestige which everywhere now attached to the Papal name; and then his Holiness, after an elaborate survey of the state of Europe, began to dilate on the dangers which threatened the social and political fabric of the universe from the revolutionary tendencies of the time—dangers which could only be combated by a hearty co operation between Church and State (and consequently, *bien entendu*, by the restoration of the Church to its previous position of supreme authority in the State).

Here the Pope was proceeding to tread upon very delicate ground, when the Emperor was saved from all further embarrassment by the sudden entrance—the bursting in, one might almost say, of his sailor-brother, Prince Henry, into the Papal closet. It had been agreed that the Prince should follow his Majesty from the Prussian Legation after the interval of about forty minutes, so as to give the Kaiser time enough to have his talk out with the Pope. But either the Prince's impatience had got the better of him, or his watch had gone wrong, for he reached the Papal antechamber somewhat before his time. That being so, the Papal Chamberlain was for the Prince

waiting with the rest of the suites until the two august potentates within the closet had completed their confabulation, for it was against all etiquette that the Holy Father should in any circumstances be disturbed in conversation with a private visitor.

But with the brusqueness of manner which ever distinguished him, and rendered him far more fit for the career of a dragoon than of a diplomatist, Count Herbert Bismarck blurted out that "a Prussian Prince could never afford to hang about in an anteroom"; and this stern avowal was promptly followed by a sharp rap at the door of the Papal closet. "*Un moment!*" pleaded a deprecatory voice from within; but not a single moment's grace more could be granted the holy Pontiff—no, not if he would die for it. Count Herbert must have his way, the sailor-Prince must enter at once—the honour of his house and nation depended on it—and the Pope must be left dangling between earth and sky astride of an unfinished sentence.

That the Emperor himself, in some subtle way, had been contributory to this astonishing episode seems to have been the conviction of the Pope; for, when questioned soon thereafter by an English journalist as to the result of his Majesty's visit, his Holiness replied:*

"I cannot say that we are either satisfied or dissatisfied with the Emperor's visit. That he came to Rome was not at our request; nor was his object in coming favourable to us, but rather to those who are against us—to those who, for ten years past, have practically compelled

* Special correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* (26th October, 1888).

me to restrict myself to this Palace, from which I cannot issue. My dignity forbids me to do so. This young man (*questo giovane*), having acceded to the German throne, has been making a round of visits to European Courts; and finally to Rome, where his presence was calculated to strengthen our adversaries and consolidate their position, not to benefit us. He came to see me; it was an act of courtesy, and I was glad to receive him. I had much to say to him; but just as I was beginning my discourse he interrupted me by calling in his brother, in order to present him to me. After that, I had no further opportunity of speaking privately with him. I did not find that the young Emperor resembled his late father, whom I personally knew and liked, and with whom I have conversed for more than an hour at a stretch. *He* was a wise and good Prince, very well read, intelligent, and large-minded. His manners were perfect."

But these words, caustic though they were, did not convey the full severity of the Holy Father's animadversions on the character of his Imperial visitor. It was an ominous circumstance that the young Emperor, "*questo giovane*," had failed to establish harmony between himself and the two greatest spiritual powers in all the world—the Pope and the Press; and as he had been severely criticised by one, so it was now his turn to administer a stern rebuke to the other.

On coming home he received a civic deputation which had begged for leave to congratulate his Majesty on his safe return from his round of visits, and at the same time to announce the city's intention of commemorating the event by erecting upon the Schlossplatz a fountain of brass or stone—the creation of Reinhold Begas, one of Germany's greatest sculptors. Herr von Forckenbeck, Burgomaster, who headed the deputation, read an

address referring to the olive-branch of peace which the Emperor had lately carried through the nations, and comparing the high, up-spouting water-jet of the fountain to the joy wherewith the people rose from their work-a-day troubles to the contemplation of the lofty aims which a beloved Prince had fixed upon for the present and the distant future. What, then, was the speechless astonishment of the deputation when the Emperor, who had listened to its effusively loyal address with a gloomy severity of air, replied to it as follows :

“Gentlemen,—I thank you for having followed me everywhere on my late tour with your friendly wishes. I am joyfully surprised by this unexpected compliment on the part of the city. But it was painful to me to think that, when sojourning in distant lands, where I was working for the good of the Empire, a portion of the Press took to discussing the most private affairs of me and my family in a manner which no private person would put up with. Gentlemen, I am about to take up my abode within the walls of this city, and I trust you will do what in you lies to prevent the recurrence of such things.”

Saying which, with an ever-gathering cloud of black displeasure on his brow, the Emperor brusquely left the room, without ever so much as extending his hand to the worthy Burgomaster, or asking him to introduce his civic colleagues ; so it was no wonder that, before retiring, the deputation stood riveted to the floor for a few moments, in blank bewilderment at the cutting reprimand to which it had been treated. It had meekly come to offer the Emperor a fountain, and been sharply lectured on the sin of interference with the affairs of others. The rebuke, thought the city fathers, was all the more unmerited,

as they had no more power of controlling the Press of Berlin than of "bossing" the journals of London or Paris. Bismarck had once contemptuously referred to the corporation of Berlin as "a Radical nest," and the Kaiser had jumped to the erroneous conclusion that there must be some direct connection, some secret relation of cause and effect, between the Radical aldermen and the Radical editors of his capital.

For it was the Liberal portion of the Press against which his Majesty's complaints were more particularly directed, and it must be owned that he had laid himself open to very severe criticism indeed. Just before starting for the second time on his travels, he had sanctioned the publication of a document which set all Germany, all Europe, ringing with talk about the private affairs of his family, and which placed his own character in a light that seemed utterly inconsistent with the theory of his being a good and natural son.

The document referred to was Bismarck's reply to the Diary of the Crown Prince, which had been published—by an old confidant of the Prince, Dr. Geffcken, as afterwards transpired—with the view of showing, as Bismarck inferred, that the deceased Emperor Frederick had taken a much more prominent and important part in the founding of the Empire than the jealous Chancellor had ever given him credit for. The Diary, thought the Chancellor, was calculated to enhance the reputation of the Crown Prince at the expense of his own, and so he hastened to neutralise its effect by denouncing it as a wicked and malignant forgery, "*primarily directed against the Emperor Frederick.*"

The only wonder is that the Emperor William did not at once seek to determine its authenticity by referring the question to his mother, who, doubtless, had possession of the original; though, indeed, the very strained nature of the relations which at this time subsisted between mother and son would probably have rendered such an application altogether fruitless. Instead of doing this, the Emperor commanded Bismarck to draw up a report on the "alleged Diary of the late Emperor"; and in this report the Chancellor committed himself to a series of statements most damaging to the character and memory of the Crown Prince.

But the most astonishing, the most incredible thing connected with the Chancellor's string of charges against the deceased Emperor Frederick, who had as yet only been about three months in his grave, was that his son hesitated not to sanction their immediate publication, without waiting for the verdict of the Criminal Court which was to try Dr. Geffcken, the divulger of the Diary, on the charge of high treason. For it was clear to all that, if calumny of the Emperor Frederick's memory had been committed, it was not so much the work of those who published, as of those who affected to doubt the genuineness of his Diary; nor was it allowed to be any justification or extenuation of their offence that they could prove their libel to be true in fact. And the saddest part of the business was that the truth of much of the libel could not possibly be denied.

It would be very difficult to offer any plausible theory of the motives which induced the son to strike what seemed to all the world so unnatural an attitude to the

memory of his father, and charity can only impel one to assume that, at this time, the young Emperor's fancy was so full of his impending progress to the South, that he could not pause to consider, from every point of view, the filial aspects of the course on which Prince Bismarck urged him to embark, and that he allowed himself to be carried away by the unscrupulous arguments of the Chancellor, who had always distrusted and disliked both the parents of his impulsive Majesty. At this time, too, be it remembered, the relations between the Emperor and his mother were of the most painful kind, and there was little doubt, as far, at least, as Bismarck was concerned, that the Chancellor believed that a criminal inquiry into the publication of the Diary would reveal a very much higher origin, or motive-source, than the hand and brain of a poor, pedantic publicist like Dr. Geffcken.

But Dr. Geffcken was the only game which the hounds of the criminal law, when slipped by Bismarck at the bidding of the Emperor, could unearth; and it soon became clear that the Doctor himself had been solely responsible for the publication of the extracts from the Diary, which he had purloined from the original when lent to him by its princely author for private perusal, as far back as 1873. At the same time the hounds of the law struck and started off on all kinds of other hopeful scents in the course of the inquiry, and the results of their discoveries were embodied in a most elaborate *Acte d' Accusation* against Dr. Geffcken, who was duly tried before the Supreme Court of the Empire at Leipzig, but set free on the ground that he had not been conscious of the nature of his offence in divulging State secrets,

of which the publication was clearly forbidden by the Criminal Code. It was a peculiar coincidence that Dr. Geffcken's incarceration had lasted just as long as the reign of his Imperial patron—ninety-nine days.

Both the Emperor and Bismarck were furious at the result of the trial, and now they hastened to publish the *Acte d' Accusation* itself, in order "to enable the Federal Governments, and their subjects, to form their own opinion as to the conduct of the Imperial judiciary in the case of Dr. Geffcken." The publication of Bismarck's report to the Emperor on the "alleged Diary" of his father had made all the world wonder, and now all the world stared again with positive stupefaction. For this *Acte d' Accusation* represented the character of the Emperor Frederick in a poorer and more unfavourable light than ever—represented him as a kind of Kaiser "Toom-Tabard"—weak, vain, aiming not at power but the mere appearance of it, "cherishing too far-reaching and impracticable aims," and so devoid of intellectual power that he could not even compose his own proclamations.

As his Chief of the Staff, General Blumenthal, had won his battles for him, so his manifesto, *An mein Volk*, and his rescript to the Chancellor which he issued on succeeding to the throne, had been drafted for him three years previously by Dr. Geffcken, in anticipation of the event. These documents had been greatly admired at the time for their lofty tone and impressive diction, but now it was made to appear that this admiration had missed its proper mark. For, after all, it was not the German Emperor, but a German pedant who

had spoken directly to the German people—a very mournful business the whole of it. How could the admirers of Kaiser Frederick forgive his son for thus helping to shatter their ideal of his buried father? Was this policy? Was it piety? Was it not rather unfilial and unfeeling in the highest degree?

The one conspicuous act of the Emperor Frederick's reign had been his dismissal of the reactionary Herr von Puttkamer from the Ministry of the Interior; and his son had not been long upon the throne before he ostentatiously invested Puttkamer with the Black Eagle, and gave him a seat of honour in the Prussian House of Lords. One of the first things the Emperor Frederick had done on ascending the throne was to re-christen the "New Palace" at Potsdam—his own birthplace—by the much more appropriate name of "Friedrichskron"; and one of the first things his son did on succeeding to his father was to restore to the Palace its previous appellation. Indeed, apart from his warm espousal of his father's scheme for pulling down the shabby old Domkirche in Berlin, and erecting upon its site a grandiose edifice which should at once be a ceremonial temple and a pantheon for the Hohenzollerns—a scheme which suited the new Emperor's own love of histrionic pomp and magnificence to perfection—apart from this, I say, there were few of his acts which did not appear to place him in sharp and astonishing antagonism to the good name of his parents.

And perhaps this apparent antagonism reached its highest pitch when, as a sequel to the publication of the Geffcken documents, the semi-official Press began to

open its batteries on Sir Robert Morier, the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, whose scent had been repeatedly struck by the hounds of the law in the course of their search for evidence to convict the divulger of the Diary. "Most interesting documents bearing on Morier," said a "reptile" writer, "had been discovered, though they could not have been put in evidence without endangering our political and dynastic interests." Here the important word was "dynastic." For the principal charge against Morier was that he had been the means of revealing to Marshal Bazaine such timely information about the movements of the German armies on Metz as enabled the French to inflict considerable losses on their foes.

What a monstrous charge! But its most monstrous aspect lay in the circumstance that it was aimed very much higher than the head of Sir Robert Morier. "What is Morier to us?" one Berlin journal rightly asked. "If possible, indeed, still less than Hecuba." The real meaning of the accusation became apparent when the reptile writer aforesaid proceeded to explain that the Liberal Morier had always stood undeservedly high in the favour of the Crown Prince and Princess; that when acting as secretary to his Embassy in Berlin, during the "Conflict Time," he had sided with the Opposition, with which the Crown Prince himself and his English wife were known to be in sympathy; that when serving as *Chargé d'Affaires* at Darmstadt, during the French war, he continued to enjoy the unabated confidence of the Crown Princess (then living close by at Homburg), and was thus in a position to become privy to

much of the military information which was almost daily sent to her by her husband at the front ; that, as a matter of fact, he had somehow transmitted to Bazaine some of the secret intelligence of which he had thus wrongfully become possessed ; and that when at last the Embassy at Berlin became vacant through the death of Lord Amthill, Bismarck had successfully objected to Sir Robert's appointment to the post, as was warmly desired by the Crown Prince and Princess, for the reason that he would again be sure to abuse his personal influence over that illustrious pair.

Viewed in the light of these allegations, the charge against Morier was clearly perceived to be a mere pretence. Bismarck did not care one straw about the English Ambassador at St. Petersburg, but, on the other hand, he thought that it behoved him to open the eyes of his countrymen to the fact that, since the year 1858, there had always been an English Ambadress in Berlin, not residing at the Embassy, and to point to some of the disastrous consequences of this deplorable fact. Why had Bismarck and the old Emperor ever kept the Crown Prince aloof from all acquaintance with the course of affairs? Because, in the words of Bismarck himself, "his Majesty dreaded the indiscreet revelations which might thus be made to the English Court, that was full of French sympathies." Why had an illustrious but anonymous pamphleteer, the author of *Fremde Hände und Mit-Regenten in Deutschland* ("Alien Hands and Co-Rulers in Germany"), declaimed so bitterly against the exercise of foreign influence on the affairs of the Fatherland? The answer is furnished by the antagonism which had

ever existed between Bismarck and the Crown Princess, and which had now also begun to exist between the Empress Frederick and her own son.

But a demand may be made for proof of the fact that William II. himself was primarily responsible for this campaign of calumny, with all its side-issues, which was thus opened against Sir Robert Morier, the favoured friend and confidant of the Empress Frederick. The answer is that the young Emperor did nothing whatever to stop this campaign—nay, that he himself contributed to its brisker prosecution by summoning to Berlin from Vienna, the military attaché, Major von Deines,* on whose reports of conversations with Marshal Bazaine, at Madrid, the charge against Sir Robert Morier had been based, and by suffering these official reports to be published in corroboration of the said charge.

It does not fall within the scope of this narrative to show how completely Sir Robert Morier succeeded in vindicating his character from the stigma of having been “so unutterably base” as to betray at once the cause of Germany and the confidence which must have been reposed in him by the Crown Princess, nor to detail the public controversy between him and Count Herbert Bismarck, which ended in a very decided European verdict against that diplomatist, to whom Sir Robert had vainly appealed, “as a gentleman and a man of honour,” for common justice in the matter. It is not so much the incidents of the controversy as the personal motives which underlay it that concern us here; and I think I

* This officer was subsequently made Military Governor to the Emperor's sons.

have conclusively shown how these motives could have been at once explained and apportioned.

It was no wonder that the young Emperor continued on a very strained footing—not only with his mother, but also with his mother's family, and that he did not, during the first year of his reign, seek to include his Royal grandmother of England in the list of those Sovereigns whom he hastened to honour and conciliate with a ceremonious visit.

CHAPTER VI.

WILLIAM THE VERSATILE.

"Imperator-Imitator!"—"William the Speaker"—A throne as pulpit and Delphic tripod—A divine-right Monarch—"Only one master, and I am he"—"William the Smasher"—Kingship by the grace of God—"Sic volo, sic jubeo!"—"Nemo me impune lacessit"—Nature and duties of a nobility—"Ex me mea nata corona"—Ancient manners in modern moulds—A military monarch—"Look here upon this picture and on that"—A modern Proteus—William II. as soldier—An army reformer—Martial, but not militant—Bayonets better than Blether—"At home and abroad"—Soldiers *versus* Socialists—"Suprema lex regis voluntas"—The "War-Lord" and his recruits—Death of Moltke: "I have lost an army"—A crowned Tyrtæus—Blood-brotherhood between Prussia and Russia—The Kaiser as sailor—His enthusiasm for the sea—Admiral of the British Fleet—"In utrumque paratus"—A marine artist—The English and German Navies—The Duke of Edinburgh—A naval critic—Compliment from Sir Edward Reed—The Kaiser and the *Daily Graphic*—An Imperial Ossian—Samoan hurricanes and naval heroism—Dropping of the pilot—"Full steam ahead."

"IMPERATOR-IMITATOR!" some epitaph-writer had already said of William II., but it was hard to see which of his ancestors had formed the special object of his Majesty's imitation. A believer in the eclectic principle, he seemed rather to have borrowed particular traits and touches from the characters of his most conspicuous ancestors: the noble reforming rage of the Great Elector; Frederick William's passion for soldiers,

with his fury for scolding his subjects; Frederick the Great's avowed thirst for glory *per se*; Frederick William the Fat's affability and love of feasting; Frederick William the Third's fondness for meeting his fellow-Sovereigns; Frederick William the Fourth's eloquence and idealism; William the First's astonishing familiarity with the councils of the Almighty; and Frederick the Third's habit of flirtation with the forward spirit of the time. The *jus imaginum* was the private right, in the exercise of which his Majesty seemed to take most delight; and every statue or portrait of his sires appeared to apostrophize and inspire him in the words of Burns:

"Remember, son, the deeds I've done,
And in your deeds I'll live again."

But it was not so much by his deeds as by his words that the Emperor began to attract the attention of Europe. For it presently appeared that there was one thing in which his Majesty far excelled all his forbears, and that was in the use of his tongue. One of his ancestors had been Dutch "William the Silent," and now he evidently aimed at becoming equally famous as a kind of German "William the Speaker." In the first year of his reign, the young Emperor had almost spoken as much as his grandfather had done in the course of all his long life. He was thus, thought many, incurring a very grave responsibility by flying so many drafts on the future, for he lost no possible opportunity of haranguing his subjects, deeming that a throne might well be made to serve the purposes of a pulpit and Delphic tripod, as well as of a silent and serene Olympus-top. A keen observer

of the spirit of the time, the Emperor perceived—in spite of Carlyle's dictum as to the relative value of speech and silence—that free and frequent utterance was in harmony with the rapid methods of the age, and its wire-hung whispering gallery of a shrunken world. In all his after-dinner and ceremonial oratory there is ever a fine manly ring of resolution and of originality, and sometimes it is positively aflame with patriotic fervour. Were his Majesty's speeches always as much distinguished by tact, as they are florid with startling imagery and instinct with striking force of character, he might perhaps claim to be one of the most effective orators who ever sat upon a throne.

There was no subject that appeared to be sacred from his eloquence. But it was soon perceived that his favourite topic for the exercise of his most perfervid oratory was the doctrine of divine right. From the very first day of his ascending the throne of his fathers, William II. determined to leave the world in no doubt whatever as to his divine appointment to the purple. Sceptics might sneer, and democrats might scoff, but that would not in the least alter the fact that he, William II., had been nominated a kind of terrestrial Providence within the dominions of the Prussian Crown. The Pope might be the Vicar of Christ, but the Kaiser-King was the direct vicerent of God. He held the patent of his royalty direct from the King of Kings.

When resisting the Revolution of 1848, Bismarck had said: "For me the phrase, 'By God's Grace,' appended to the names of Christian Sovereigns, is no mere empty sound, but an acknowledgment rather that the Princes

thus entrusted with God's sceptre mean to rule with it on earth in accordance with His will, as revealed in His holy gospel." These words expressed to perfection the belief of the new King William, who had hastened to inform his Army and Navy that "God's decree had placed him at their head," and that "the confidence with which I step into the place to which God's will calls me is immovably strong." "You know," said his Majesty at the annual dinner of the Brandenburg Diet—a convivial meeting which, under William II., came to acquire all the significance of our Lord Mayor's banquet with its momentous speeches—

"You know," he said, "that I regard my position as appointed for me by God, and in this consciousness I daily labour; and be assured that every morning and evening of my life I begin and end the day with prayer for my Empire, my realm, and Brandenburg, which is so near to my heart. . . . The Princely House must preserve firm trust in God, while the people must trust in their leaders."

Leader, perhaps, would have been the better word, for on a subsequent occasion of a similarly festive kind the Emperor-King reminded his subjects that the first servant of the State was also its master: "Now, as ever, I am assured that salvation lies in co-operation. That is one of the results of monarchy. There is only one master in this country, and I am he. I shall suffer no other beside me." This was spoken, curiously enough, at Düsseldorf, where "blackguard Heine," as Carlyle calls him, had once seen Napoleon. "I saw him," wrote the poet, "and on his brow was written, 'Thou shalt have no other gods but me!'"

The same intolerance of rivalry or opposition of any kind breathed in every word of another of his Majesty's allocutions to the Brandenburg Diet :

" I see in the people and land which have descended to me a talent, entrusted to me by God, which, as the Bible says, it is my duty to increase, and for which I shall one day have to give an account. I mean with all my strength to trade so with my talent that I hope I shall add many another to it. Those who will help me, be they who they will, I heartily welcome. Those who oppose me, I shall dash in pieces."

It mattered not to the Emperor that, after this, he began to be called *Wilhelm der Zerschmetterer*, " William the Smasher " ; for to the claims of omnipotence he now proceeded to add the pretensions of infallibility. " The ways," he said on another occasion, " into which I and my Government have struck are the right ways, nor can I deviate from the path which I have prescribed to myself, and for which I have only to answer to God and my conscience." This doctrine of his exclusive responsibility for all his actions to his heavenly Suzerain, the King of Kings, was again asseverated by William II., with all the solemnity which attends the promulgation of a papal dogma, when he went to Königsberg—the Vatican, so to speak, of the Prussian monarchy—to receive the allegiance of the province (May, 1890) :

" Among the thoughts that rise within me when I am in Königsberg, there is one which, I am firmly convinced, must have occurred to each one of you at least once in his life. I mean that Königsberg has acquired an important place in our whole modern life, owing to the fact that it was here, in the Palace Church, that his Majesty, the late Emperor William I., again proclaimed

before the whole world his Kingship by the Grace of God. This 'Kingship by the Grace of God' expresses the fact that we Hohenzollerns accept our Crown only from Heaven, and are responsible to Heaven for the performance of its duties. I, too, am animated by this view, and am resolved to act and to govern on this principle."

Hastening to act on this principle, the young Emperor sent his photograph to one of his Ministers (Herr von Gossler), with "*Sic volo, sic jubeo!*" written on the back of it, by way of combining a compliment with a command; while, on going to Munich, where he was begged to write something in the "Golden Book" of the city as a souvenir of his visit, his Majesty seized a pen and dashed off: "*Suprema lex, regis voluntas*"—a variation of the "*A Deo rex, a rege lex,*" which had been the ruling motto of his ancestors. Not the will of God but the will of the King was now the highest law—an anti-constitutional theory which caused even Bismarck to remind the Emperor of the maxim: *Vox populi, vox Dei*. But his Majesty was not yet done with his Latin. For when his ex-Minister of Justice, Dr. von Friedberg (a man of Jewish descent, on whom the Kaiser Frederick, to the horror and holding-up of hands of all true Prussians, had conferred the Black Eagle), celebrated his eightieth birthday, he was at once surprised and puzzled by the reception of the Emperor's photograph, with the inscription: *Nemo me impune lacessit*—which was Stuart Scotland's equally resolute, if more self-restrained, way of saying that she would "dash to pieces" all who dared to molest or oppose her.

But a still sterner lecture on the unpardonable sin of

opposition to the Royal will was administered by the Emperor-King, again at Königsberg, the cradle of the Monarchy, to the nobles of East Prussia, a province which, more, perhaps, than any other, had been suffering from the severe agricultural distress that formed the sharpest thorn in his Majesty's crown. Legislation had been at work to remove this distress, but some of the leading land-owners, not altogether satisfied with the action of the Government, had assumed a partisan attitude, in and out of Parliament, not altogether in harmony with the expectations of their feudal superior when he described his nobility as the "noblest elements of his people" (much to the disgust and indignation of the residue of his people), and further said:—

"Even as the ivy winds round the gnarled oak, and, while adorning it with its leaves, protects it when storms are raging through its topmost branches, so does the nobility of Prussia close round my House. May it, and with it the whole nobility of the German nation, become a brilliant example to those sections of the people who still hesitate. Let us enter into this struggle together. Forward with God, and dishonour to him who deserts his King!"

To those nobles who had thus "deserted their King" by venturing to think for themselves in a matter directly affecting their own dearest interests, dishonour of the direst kind at once accrued through their names being erased from the list of those invited to banquet with their liege-lord; while, on the other hand, those nobles who had abnegated the function of independent thought and action on the agrarian question were rewarded with high decorations, and by having their names applied to the

various forts engirdling Königsberg. And then at the banquet from which the unworthy nobles had been excluded, what was it to which their more favoured brethren were now privileged to listen from the lips of their imperious and infallible lord?

“Even the word ‘opposition’ has reached my ears. Gentlemen, an Opposition of Prussian noblemen, directed against their King, is a monstrosity. Such an Opposition would be justifiable only when the King was known to be at its head. The history of our House teaches us that lesson. How often have my predecessors had to oppose misguided members of a single class on behalf of the whole community! The successor of him who became Sovereign Duke in Prussia, in his own right, will follow the same path as his great ancestor. The first King of Prussia once said, ‘*Ex me mea nata corona,*’ and his great son ‘set up his authority as a *rocher de bronze*.’ I, in turn, like my Imperial grandfather, hold my Kingship as by the Grace of God.”

The class privileges of the Prussian nobility had been abolished; in the eye of the law they stood on a footing of perfect equality with the rest of their fellow-subjects, and yet they were now denied the same right of free speech as was guaranteed by the Constitution to the plebeian portion of the nation. But what other theory of the political duties of an aristocracy could have been expected from a Monarch who, when on this same occasion unveiling a monument to his grandfather, said to a number of gentlemen surrounding him:—

“It was on this spot that King William openly declared before his subjects that he held his crown from God alone. This is also my own deepest conviction, and has ever served me as a guide in all my actions.”

But while thus asserting his crown to be encircled with a heavenly aureole, which could not but inspire a feeling of religious awe for it in the breasts of his subjects, the Emperor had failed not to court the assistance of those arts which are calculated to enhance "the divinity that doth hedge a king" with the added halo of earthly glory. For not content with reviving the doctrine of divine right in its purest and most uncompromising form—"not as a pale and shivering ghost apologising for its return to the haunts of men, but as the governing fact of the whole European situation"—in an age distinguished for its rampant spirit of democracy; not content, I say, with merely doing this, William II. also set himself to recompress the manners of the present into the moulds of the past. Nothing would satisfy him but that he should make his Court the most ceremonious and splendid in all Europe.

"It is my will," he said in a sumptuary edict, "that, with regard to the dresses to be worn at my Court, the becoming manners and customs of former times shall be revived." And there was much consternation among the civilian elements of the *Hoffahig*, or "Court-capable" kind—timid artists, awkward deputies, ungainly professors, and the like—when thus confronted with the alternative of figuring, like the Laird o' Cockpen, in knee breeches, sword, and cocked hat on the slippery parquet floor of the White Saloon, or of being frowned upon as so many democratic curmudgeons whose loyalty was not equal to the expense of a set of silver buckles and a few lessons in deportment, in order that they might thus help to shed a brighter lustre on the Imperial Crown.

But it was also the will of the Emperor that the dances, as well as the dresses, of the past should be restored to life; and it was felt to be a coincidence, at once peculiar and painful, that, on the day when their Majesties were first treated to the resuscitation of a minuet *à la reine* at a grand Court ball, thousands of the hungry unemployed should have been marching through the chief streets of the capital, smashing in windows, plundering shops, and shouting for work. Historical entertainments, too, became all the vogue at Court, and on these occasions it was simple rapture to the Emperor to be able to masquerade as the Great Elector. "For of all my predecessors," as his Majesty once wrote, "he is the one for whom I feel the greatest enthusiasm, and who, from of old, has shone before me as the example of my youth."

Another thing, among many, which betrayed a resolution on the part of the Emperor to give his divine-right doctrine all the adventitious support which could be derived from outward pomp and show, was the new code of "Royal honours" which he hastened to promulgate for the guidance of his suite and subjects, according to the special circumstances of his appearing among them—"The officer on duty will ride abreast of the right hind wheel," and what not. Court functions, too, began to be invested with a military pomp such as they had never known before; and, in particular, the opening of Parliament in the White Saloon of the Schloss was ever attended with such a measured tramp-tramping in of the Schloss Guard company, in its old Frederician uniform, and with such a resounding clatter of musket-butts on the

polished parquet floor in front of the Imperial dais, as might remind the deputies that the throne of Prussia was "broad-based" on something very much more substantial than the people's will.

What would Frederick William I., the creator of the Prussian Army, yet the sternest economist who ever sat upon a throne—what would he have thought had he been able to rise from the tomb, rattan in hand, to contemplate the enormous sums which were now added to his descendant's civil list, to enable him to keep up the dignity of his divine-right crown? What would he have thought of the floating Palace and the palatial train—costing millions—which were now required by the Emperor for his meteoric journeys by sea and land? Above all things, what would he have thought of the multitudinous works of art by which his Imperial descendant was now seeking to familiarise his subjects with the features of their Heaven-appointed ruler? Frederick the Great was very chary of sitting to a painter, and left but few original portraits of himself; but William II. had not been a couple of years on the throne of Frederick II., before his busts and portraits might have filled a goodly-sized gallery. Scarcely a day in fact elapsed, when his Majesty was in Berlin, without his driving to the studio of some artist or other. And then, too, how heroic the attitudes, how magnificent the drapery, how suggestive the setting of all these counterfeit presentments of his Majesty!

"Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself;
An eye, like Mars, to threaten and command;
A station like the herald Mercury,
New lighted on a heaven-kissing hill."

But perhaps the mythological character to which William II. bore most resemblance was Proteus, for he was for ever altering his personal appearance. He would go to Norway and return with a full beard, only to have it shaved off again as out of harmony with the fitness of things. And then the changing of his uniforms was endless. He had the largest military wardrobe of any Sovereign in all Europe, and it rarely happened that he wore the same uniform on two successive days. He has even been known to change his dress as often as half-a-dozen times a day; but then it must be remembered that these Protean metamorphoses would often be demanded by military etiquette, even if they were not prompted by personal vanity.

Bismarck once remarked that, when estimating the character of any of his adversaries, he first of all subtracted the man's vanity, and that in the case of some of them—Beust, for instance—there was then little or nothing left. But this standard of judgment might well be applied to William II., with a very different result. For the elimination of the element of vanity from his character would still leave a large residuum of very admirable virtues. Showy his Majesty may be as a soldier, but he is also solid. No man, it is true, can be safely pronounced to be a good soldier until he shall have proved his skill and courage on the field of battle. Nor let it be forgotten that it was only after flying from the field of Mollwitz, where he received his baptism of fire, that Frederick the Great became the greatest captain of his time.

But everything goes to show that William II. has in

him the stuff of a first-rate soldier—not merely of the type of his grandfather, which was anything but the highest type, but also of the pattern of the hero of Hohenfriedberg and Leuthen. William I. was essentially what might be called a gaiter-button soldier—like the Duke of Cambridge—a man of careful detail, who knew the limits of his own capacity much too well to think for a moment of taking the real conduct of his wars out of the hands of his Moltke. But in addition to his grandfather's masterly grasp of detail, William II. would also appear to possess the eye of the higher commander, as far as this can be inferred from the way in which his Majesty has repeatedly manoeuvred large masses of troops. For his combinations were always distinguished by boldness and originality; and even if he was sometimes adjudged by his Chief of the Staff to have made grave mistakes, was it not better that these blunders should have been committed in time of peace, in order that they might be obviated in time of war?

As it was the Army, the mainstay of his Monarchy, to which the Emperor first addressed himself on ascending his divine-right throne, so it was also the Army, as the guardian of the national security, which became the primary object of his Majesty's solicitude. In the previous chapter I have already referred to the vigour with which the Emperor began to rejuvenate the Army, and he displayed equal energy in the introduction of other military reforms, which proved that his Majesty was more than abreast of his time in respect, no less of the spirit of humanity, than of the science of human destruction,

In the former regard he issued a stern decree against the cruel and brutal treatment of the private soldier. "In my Army," he said, "every soldier shall be lawfully, justly, and worthily treated, so as thus to arouse and promote in him delight in, and devotion to, his calling, love and confidence in his superiors"—and if this, his will, were not respected—then by the living God . . . ! Another edict of almost equal humanity was that in which the Emperor set himself "to oppose with the utmost energy the spread of luxury in the Army," which was proving the financial ruin of many of his ablest officers. Hitherto these officers had mainly been recruited from the ranks of the noblesse, but now William II. was willing to accept "nobility of sentiment" as an equivalent for "nobility of birth."

"The descendants of the noble families of the country, and the sons of brave officers and civil servants, form the traditional nucleus of the officers' corps ; but, concurrently with these, the sons of honourable middle-class families, who cherish King and country, who love the profession of arms, and who entertain Christian sentiments, appear to me as equally capable of furnishing in the future a valuable contingent to the Army."

"Christian sentiments !" "Aha !" cried out Herr Stöcker and his anti-Semitic friends, "do you perceive the meaning of that, then ?" Moreover, the better to enlarge the recruiting field for officers—for two new Army Corps had been created—the Emperor ordained that their private income-qualification should be considerably reduced. But perhaps a more important reform than any of these personal ones was the new Field Exercise Rules which the Emperor issued soon after

his accession, "in grateful memory of his Majesty, my father, at whose instigation they have been drawn up. . . ." The new rules were to be carried out to the letter, and "I am firmly resolved to punish with dismissal any contravention of this my will"—a military reformer, this youthful War-Lord, who was not in the least to be trifled with by anyone under his supreme command.

New instruments of combat required a new style of fighting. Of William II., as a soldier, it may truly be said what Cæsar wrote of the Gauls—" *novis rebus semper studebat.*" Among other things, he was quick to adopt smokeless powder; he elaborated the use of war-dogs; employed wire-fencing to impede the forward rush of an enemy; introduced armoured turrets on wheels as a kind of movable field-redoubts; simplified the uniform and kit of the soldier—supplied him with a field-tent, at once wind, water, and fire-proof; introduced the lance as the universal weapon of the four different kinds of cavalry; and last, but not least, he consented to the reduction of the period of conscript service with the colours—for the infantry, at least—from three to two years. This last-named innovation had been enough almost to make the old Emperor turn in his grave, but a new military era had begun with his grandson, who proved himself singularly open to the spirit of the time, and old wine had to be poured into new bottles.

William II. is not bellicose; but, at the same time, his whole soul is wrapped up in soldiering. As long as he is seated on the throne, Germany will never be hurried into a heedless or unjust war. If she draws the sword at all, it will only be in her own defence,

or that of her allies. Of that the world may be absolutely sure, though the French, much to the discredit of their judgment, still affect to have their suspicions. But, while the Emperor is not aggressive, there is no more ardent and devoted student of the military art in all Europe. His passion for reviews ("*defilirium tremens*," as the wanton wit of a Frenchman called it) is absorbing; and at all the great State functions of the year at which he has to figure, that of the grand autumn manœuvres pleases him best. On these occasions his Majesty generally takes personal command of an Army Corps, and sometimes of two. Even his favourite diversions are military, a game of *Kriegspiel*, or a lecture on some campaign; but more attractive to him still than either of those occupations is the serious pastime of taking garrisons unawares. In this respect the Emperor seems ubiquitous, like the ghost in *Hamlet*—" 'tis here, 'tis there, 'tis gone"; so that, for miles around any particular place where his Majesty chances to be, the troops have learnt the useful art of sleeping with one eye open and either ear attent.

The Fatherland, thinks the Emperor, owes far more to its Armies than to its Parliaments, and of this truth his Majesty frequently took occasion to remind those of his subjects whom he deemed to be in danger of having their slender wits confused by the vapouring of demagogues. For example, when presenting (1891) new colours to various regiments on the anniversary of Düppel, his Majesty said :

"It has been the soldiers and the Army, not Parliamentary majorities and decisions, that have welded the

German Empire together, and my confidence rests on the Army. We live in serious times, and hard trials may be before us in coming years; but I remind you of the words delivered by my late grandfather in the presence of his officers at Coblenz, when he said, 'These are the gentlemen on whom I can rely.' That is my belief and confidence, too. Whatever may come, we will hold our colours and our traditions high, mindful of the words of Albert Achilles, 'I know no more respectable place to die than in the midst of my enemies.' This is the heartfelt conviction of all Prussian officers, and my unshakable reliance on the fidelity, the courage, and the devotion of my Army and the regiments to whom I have presented colours to-day."

And again, on a similar occasion in 1894, on the double anniversary of the battle of Leipzig and the birth of the Emperor Frederick, his Majesty said :

"As in 1861, when my grandfather undertook the reorganisation of his Army—misunderstood by many, resisted by still more, but brilliantly justified afterwards—then, as now, discord and suspicion prevailed in the nation. The only pillar on which our Empire rested was the Army. And so it is still. . . . You, gentlemen, take over the custody of these colours, and, with them, the obligation to hand down to posterity the traditions of devotion, discipline, and absolute obedience to the Commander-in-Chief, even unto death, against enemies at home and abroad."

"*At home and abroad.*" Mark that! For the Emperor is never tired of reminding his fighting-men that it is their duty to secure the peace of the Empire no less from external than from internal assault; and, indeed, it is too frequently forgotten by those millennial apostles who clamour for the abolition of all standing armies, that a force of mere police is no longer capable of

coping with the tremendous possibilities of social revolution which have been created by the conditions of modern existence in densely-populated industrial States, with all their ever-recurring conflicts between capital and labour. The people of the United States boast that they do not require a standing army, and yet every now and again they have to confess with shame that nowhere can anarchy raise its terrific head with more impunity and success than precisely in the comparatively soldierless Republic of the West.

The German Emperor has a peace command of about half-a-million men ; but, on the other hand, he never forgets that the standing army of the Social Democrats is more than thrice as numerous—that, in fact, the number of Socialist voters had risen from 100,000 in 1871, to 1,786,000 in 1890. I think it must be the recollection of this significant fact which ever gives their peculiar tone to the little speeches which the Emperor is in the habit of addressing to his recruits, and which excite so much indignant comment among certain classes of his subjects, as seeming to prepare the mind of the young soldier for the possibility of civil war. Once at Potsdam, for example (and every year on the same occasion the German War-Lord substantially repeats himself), he said to his recruits :

“For you there is only one foe, and that is my foe. In view of our present Socialist troubles, it may come to this, that I command you to shoot down your own relatives, brothers, and even parents in the streets—which God forbid, but then you must obey my orders without a murmur.”

An eye-witness declared that while his Majesty spoke these words in a loud, emphatic voice, the "*suprema lex regis voluntas*" flamed in his eyes. But on a subsequent occasion it was to flame still more fiercely upon his tongue.

Said his Majesty to the recruits :—

"I require Christian soldiers, who say their Lord's Prayer. The soldier should not have a will of his own, but all of you should have one will, and that is my will. There exists only one law, and that is my law; and now go and do your duty, and be obedient to your superiors."

Or again :—

"You have just sworn allegiance to me in the presence of God, and you have thus, at the same moment, become my soldiers and my comrades. You have the honour of belonging to my Guard, and being stationed in and around my residence and my capital; you are called upon, in the first place, to protect me against the foreign and domestic foe. Be faithful, and do not forget that your honour is mine."

The redeeming feature in all these military harangues was that they were distinguished by a ring of terrible earnestness. But otherwise it was a spectacle novel in history—certainly in Prussian history—this spectacle of the War-Lord introducing so much of the element of speech into the business of soldiering, hitherto the most speechless of all professions. But even when the Emperor contrived to be brief, he could not help expressing himself in the melodramatic and emotional manner of a Victor Hugo, as when, for example, the news of Moltke's death (April, 1891) reached him at the Wartburg, where the silently labouring

Luther had hurled his ink-pot at the ugly head of Satan. "I am deeply shocked," telegraphed his Majesty back to Berlin; "I have lost an Army; I return at once." He returned at once, and ordained that the obsequies of Moltke, "one of the greatest commanders of all time," should be celebrated with something like sovereign honours, he himself following the coffin sorrowfully on foot; while his general order to the Army announcing the decease of the nonagenarian Field-Marshal was a marvel of emotional eulogy—yet, after all, only an expansion of the Spartan-like panegyric which Frederick the Great once pronounced over the grave of the Great Elector: *Messieurs, Der hat viel gethan*—"Gentlemen, *he* did much."

Moltke had always been "silent in seven languages"; but though William II. aimed at being his own Chief of the Staff, no less than at being his own Chancellor, the taciturnity of his deeply revered master in the art of war was a virtue which he did not find it convenient to copy. The saying, *Imperator-Imitator*, did not apply here. On all possible occasions—at reviews, parades, mess-dinners, swearings-in of recruits, Court banquets, military anniversaries, unveilings of monuments, presentations of colours, and fraternal meetings with his fellow-Sovereigns—his Majesty was never happy until he had flamed up into a fine martial ardour, and made the ears of all Europe tingle with his warlike allusions. Sometimes his speeches read like the homilies of a field-preacher, sometimes like the fervid apostrophes of a French poet, and sometimes like the most floridly picturesque pages of an Archenholtz or a Napier.

On all these occasions the Emperor betrayed a truly astonishing knowledge of military history—and not only of his own country, but of others as well. “Ah,” he exclaimed, when the 93rd Highlanders began to sweep past him at Wimbledon on the occasion of his State visit to London (1891), “these were the men, were they not, who formed the thin red line at Balaclava?” On the occasion of this review, when so many of England’s citizen-soldiers marched past the Emperor, he declared himself to be “*ganz von Begeisterung besoffen*”—“quite intoxicated with enthusiasm”; but his Majesty’s enthusiasm reached a very much higher pitch still when he was made honorary Colonel of the “Royals,” and was able to entertain the deputation of officers who went over from Dublin to Berlin, to receive his commands, with flaming memories of Blenheim, Malplaquet, and Waterloo, where Prussia and England had cemented with commingled blood their brotherhood in arms.

Yet this blood-brotherhood between Prussia and Russia was just as ancient, and would be equally enduring, as the Tsar Peace-keeper was told on the occasion of one of his visits to Berlin, at a banquet given him by the Kaiser Alexander Regiment of the Guards. On this occasion his German Majesty treated his solemnly silent Russian guest to one of his finest flights of military eloquence:—

“At a festival like this, concerning as it does a regiment which can look back on a long and glorious history, and which, at the same time, enjoys the honour of seeing its Imperial Chief in its midst, recollection naturally plays a great part. It is this recollection which carries me back to the time when my deceased

grandfather, as yet a young officer, received the Cross of St. George for valour displayed before the foe, and by his deportment in the bullet-rain acquired the chiefship of the Kaluga Regiment. That is an incident which I recall, in order to drink to the glorious common traditions and memories of the Russian and the Prussian Armies. I drink to the memory of those who, in heroic defence of their Fatherland, fell at Borodino, and who, in union with us, bled in victorious battle at Arcis-sur-Aube and Brienne. I drink to the brave defenders of Sebastopol and to the valiant combatants of Plevna. Gentlemen, I call upon you to drain your glasses with me to the health of our comrades of the Russian Army. Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

With extracts like this a goodly volume might be filled, but I think I have already said enough generally about the Emperor in his character as a soldier; and now I must proceed to draw a corresponding picture of his Majesty in his co-relative capacity as a sailor.

William II. is the first of his race, so to speak, who has taken seriously to the water, so that a duck natant might now, fittingly enough, be added to the scutcheon which has hitherto only borne a rapacious land-eagle. His grandfather taught Germany how to march, and it was reserved for him to show her how to swim.

The Great Elector, for whom the Emperor has a boundless admiration, had a sort of baby fleet with which he made bold to indulge in tentative colonial adventures on the Gold Coast; but it was reserved to his ambitious descendant, Kaiser William II., to scour the seas in search of ownerless and unattached lands, whereof to make a new Germany *outré mer*. Of all the phenomena connected with the regeneration of Germany,

none is more striking or momentous than the creation of its fleet, which is now about the second strongest on the Continent of Europe.

Though solicitous enough about the naval fortunes of the Fatherland, the old Emperor was essentially a soldier in his preferences and pursuits. But his grandson, while equally ardent in his devotion to the Army, has a very large corner in his heart for the fighting force of Germany by sea; and he had not been long on the throne before he organised—in the historic region of the Redoubts of Düppel—combined land and sea manœuvres on a scale unprecedented even in England. He is the child of his time, which is one of naval and transmarine enterprise, and he grew up, so to speak, with the growth of the Imperial fleet, being fascinated with the novelty of this instrument for protecting the Fatherland at home and expanding it abroad. From his mother he inhaled the inspiring story of England's greatness, and he was struck with the strong desire to emulate her methods of exerting and acquiring power. On one of his yearly visits to Norway, he made a profound study of Captain Mahan's famous work on "Sea Power."

When a boy at Potsdam, he was fond of reading naval novels—especially those of Captain Marryat—and nothing delighted him more than to have an occasional cruise among the loch-like arms of the Havel on board miniature sailing-frigate (the *Royal Louise*) of the old type, which was once sent as a present from the Royal Family of England. He was also a passionate rower, and a very strong one too, albeit restricted to the use of one arm; and when the 'Varsity race falls to Oxford, which

he once visited as Prince William, he never fails to send a warm congratulatory telegram to the winning crew. He has done all he could, by the presentation of challenge-cups and other stimulations, to promote a similar spirit of aquatic rivalry between the German Universities, and he aims at making Kiel a kind of German Cowes. For it is at the latter place, where his presence during the regatta week has now become a kind of annual institution, that he spends the happiest days of the year. His Majesty is not a very ardent votary of the turf, being indeed a rather infrequent attendant at the various race-courses near Berlin, but he is passionately attached to what the Germans call *Wassersport*; and nothing would content his Majesty but that, through the purchase of the Clyde-built *Meteor*, erstwhile the quick-sailing *Thistle* yacht, he should acquire a status other than that accorded him by his sovereign rank among the autumn society of Cowes.

Never did the Emperor enjoy any spectacle half so much as he did that of the two long lines of England's iron-ribbed bulldogs as they lay stretched along the brine of the Solent, in front of the marine residence of the Mistress of the Sea, whom his Majesty came to visit in the second year of his reign, 1889; and never did any compliment so intensely please him as the title of Admiral of the English Fleet, conferred upon him by his Royal grandmother on the same occasion. Among all the multitudinous portraits of himself which the Emperor has caused to be executed, perhaps the most striking is that of his Majesty, in his naval uniform, standing on the bridge of a war-vessel with a telescope under

his arm, and a proud, defiant look upon his face. Certainly Lord Nelson never could have looked half so haughty and invincible after the battle of Copenhagen or the Nile ; but then the German Kaiser belongs to that class of resolute and resourceful men who, at a moment's notice, would as lightly undertake to perform a surgical operation or sink a fleet. "*In utrumque paratus*" is his bold and versatile motto.

Though, like Lord Nelson, not a particularly good sailor, the Emperor's enthusiasm for the sea is superior to all its horrors ; and even its terrors gave a fresh zest to his second return journey from Russia, when the *Hohenzollern* was caught in a tremendous storm and all but wrecked. In his study at the New Palace, Potsdam, the most conspicuous ornaments are the models of a Krupp gun and of a modern battleship ; and once, when talking to an American visitor, he let his pen run over his blotting-pad, tracing the hideously inartistic outlines of the "ironclad of the future." For the sea, its ships and its shores, are ever his favourite theme for the exercise of his pencil and brush. His picture of a "Fight between Torpedo-boats and Ironclads" is really a most meritorious performance, being distinguished as much by scientific accuracy of detail as by its dramatic force and *vraisemblance*. The same remark applies to his "Artillery Practice off the Coast" (of Norway), as well as to the other naval sketches and water-colours which adorn the walls of his cabin in the *Meteor* and the *Hohenzollern*, which latter floating-palace, for the rest, is almost exclusively hung throughout with all the finest battleships of the British Navy. And what, then, said the Emperor

on proposing the health of his uncle, the Duke of Edinburgh, when the latter was presented with the rank of a German Admiral?

“The German Navy has always taken the English Navy as its model, and, though in its infancy in comparison with the mightiest Navy in the world, it is being built up stone by stone, like a house. The German Navy not only regards the British Navy as its technical and scientific model, but also regards its heroes as lodestars for its own officers and crews, who are not less patriotic than they. It is true that the special purpose of the German Navy is the maintenance of peace, but it will do its duty, too, if called on to fight. Should it ever happen that the British and the German Navy have to fight shoulder to shoulder against a common enemy, the famous *parole* of England’s greatest naval hero before the battle of Trafalgar, ‘England expects that every man shall do his duty,’ will find an echo in the patriotic hearts of the German Navy.”

When Moltke died, the Emperor exclaimed that he “had lost an army.” On the other hand perhaps his Majesty may have felt, when England’s sailor-Prince became a German Sovereign, that he had “found a navy,” and thus redressed the balance of the Empire’s fighting strength. But, in any case, the Kaiser lost no opportunity of agitating for an augmentation of his naval power; and when he suspected the Reichstag of lukewarmness in the matter, he would ask its leading members out to Potsdam, ply them well with beer and tobacco, deliver a two-hours’ lecture, with the aid of maps and limelight views, on the War in the East, and the miserable disproportion between the ever-growing mercantile marine of the Empire and the battleships which had to guard it, and then dismiss the deputies with the final appeal: “Rejoice the heart of

Prince Bismarck, the founder of our colonial policy, on his eightieth birthday, by granting all the necessary sums demanded for the Navy."

But his Majesty's propaganda did not stop here. For one day, while perusing his *Daily Graphic*, his eye was arrested by an illustration of the Japanese attack on Wei-Hai-Wei—the background being studded with the battleships of the Japanese, the foreground filled up with an imposing array of British ironclads, mere critical spectators of the scene; while at the side of the stage, peeping out from its wings, so to speak, could be seen a solitary German flagship, of an ancient-looking pattern, *under sail*. "Has it come to this, then," the Emperor may have thought, "that we cannot even give our fighting vessels coals, and that they must live and move like an underpaid and penurious German clerk in the city of London, who supports himself on pickled herring and water, while his English rival revels in roast beef and strength-bestowing stout?" At any rate, his Majesty at once caused the humiliating illustration to be reproduced by his naval hydrographers, with the words, "What a mockery is this!" written by his own hand in the corner, and distributed among the members of the Reichstag, who, sharing his Majesty's sense of shame at the wretched figure thus cut by the German Navy in the Far East, hastened to vote supplies for more ironclads.*

* Some little time *before* the breaking out of the war between China and Japan (in 1894), Sir Edward Reed, the eminent naval designer, had the honour of a long conversation with the Emperor, and in referring to this conversation, *after* the first naval battles of the war, he said that "his Majesty's leading views of naval questions, which were perfectly clear and most pronounced, had been fulfilled

The sight of a new ironclad gliding from the ways of Wilhelmshaven, or Stettin, ever filled the heart of the Emperor with the joy of a mother who rejoices over the birth of her first child. For, as he once said at Bremen, "*Navigare necesse est! Vivere non est necesse!*" And on these launching occasions, his christening eloquence ever rose to something like an Ossianic pitch of song. For example:—

"A token of the industry of the Fatherland this vessel, after strenuous toil in the Imperial dockyard, now stands before us about to be given over to its element. Thou shalt now be placed in line among the protected fighting units of the German Navy; thou shalt serve in the protection of the Fatherland, shalt meet the enemy with defiance and disdain. Sprung from the old German saga are the names of the ships which belong to the same class. Therefore shalt thou likewise recall to us the grey past of our ancestors and the puissant deity whom our Germanic forefathers in their ignorance supplicated and worshipped, and whose mighty kingdom extended even to the icy North Pole and the far South Pole, on the watery billows of which the battles of the North were fought out, and death and ruin carried into the land of the enemy. The potent name of this great deity thou shalt bear. Mayest thou prove worthy of it. I baptize thee by the name of *Ægir*."

Can it therefore be wondered at that, with his heart so given to the sea and its ships, the head of the Emperor should be so full of naval imagery, and that some of the boldest metaphors which have graced his after-dinner

in a very remarkable manner by the naval action off the Yalu River. . . . In recalling one conversation in particular upon this point, I cannot but feel that the recent battle was practically described, as it were by anticipation, in his Majesty's forecast of the overbearing effects of powerful armaments of quick-firing guns."

speeches should have been borrowed from the German Ocean and the Baltic?

“As a friend of maritime affairs I follow the phenomena of nature. When I sailed the Baltic with a squadron for the first time, the question of the change of course arose. The change was made, but the ships were separated in the fog in consequence. Suddenly the German flag emerged from the mist, high above the clouds—a surprising sight which filled us all with admiration. Later, the whole squadron, accurately steering its new course, emerged after the fog had blown off. This seemed to me a sign. Whenever dark hours may come to our Fatherland, we shall reach our goal by dint of pushing forwards, according to the grand watchword, ‘We Germans fear God, and nothing else in the world.’”

Similarly, it was in the spirit pervading this effusion that, when christening a new corvette at Wilhelmshaven (April, 1889), he glorified the deeds of those of his sailors who were overwhelmed by the Samoan hurricane:—

“When sorrow is shared it is soothed—a fine thought, and worthy of Goethe. Valiant men they were, and, no doubt, to many of you, good friends and comrades. That they were brave they had already shown a month or two before their deaths. Yet we will not give way to vain lamentations. No, rather let them be to us as exemplars. Having fought victoriously against the hand of man, they met a glorious death in a courageous combat against the elements let loose—for God so willed it; but thus they died for Kaiser and Reich. And here I must recall the beautiful words of the poet that are, doubtless, familiar to many of you. When Admiral Medina Sidonia, with bent head, comes and announces to the King of Spain that his mighty Armada is annihilated, the King tries to comfort him by saying, ‘God rules above us; I sent you to contend with men, and not with rocks and storms.’* ”

* Schiller's *Don Carlos*, Act iii., Sc. 7.

And such is the case here. May each of you who is a commander, or may yet become one, always remember this—that he who, in fighting gloriously with the elements, loses his vessels through the dispensation of God's will, in my eyes dies just as gloriously as one who falls when storming a hostile position at the head of his regiment."

And it was again in naval imagery that the Emperor expressed himself when he suddenly "dropped his pilot." But this "dropping of the pilot" was an incident which will require a chapter all to itself.

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CHAPTER VII.

A BISMARCK DRAMA.

Bismarck's Macbeth-like resolve—"Crabbed age and youth"—A struggle for Power—Bismarck a political Wallenstein—The Chancellor and Dr. Windthorst—An Imperial remonstrance—A dramatic interview—The Kaiser's messengers—A fateful day—"My dear Prince"—Duke of Lauenburg and Field-Marshal—Bismarck's *pièce justificatif*—William the Second ("to None")—His heart-felt sorrow—A "first-class funeral"—A cautioning circular—The *frondeur* of Friedrichsruh and the "rich heir"—The *Neue Herr*—A "rowdy-dowdy" drama—The Great Elector's Schwarzenberg—"When I want to travel *incognito*"—Anglo-German agreement as to Africa—The new Commercial Treaties—Bismarck as leader of the Opposition—The Kaiser's eulogy of his new Chancellor—"Ministre étranger—aux affaires"—Bismarck and Boetticher—Wedding of Count H. Bismarck—The ex-Chancellor at Vienna—Boycotting of the Bismarcks—Another circular despatch—"Quod licet Jovi, non licet bovi"—Count Limburg-Stürum—The Jupiter Tonans of the Sachsenwald—A national scandal and reproach—The Kaiser's telegram from Güns—Bismarck's answer—A speech at Bremen—The Emperor's theories of history—Moltke's corrective remark—A miraculous flask of Rhenish—*Redintegratio amoris*—A steel cuirass—"Hi-Bismarck" "Hi-Kaiser!"—The Prince's eightieth birthday—Resolution of the Reichstag—The Emperor's indignation telegram—His exquisite revenge—His armed advance on Friedrichsruh—"Who is he that cometh like an honoured guest?"—A sword of honour and a salvo of artillery—The "nation in arms" *versus* the "nation in eloquence"—"*Spectemur agendo*"—"Er lebe hoch! Hurrah!"

THE dropping of the Imperial pilot was all the more surprising as fifteen months had scarcely elapsed since the Emperor addressed a New Year's message to his "dear Prince," praying heaven, among other things,

“that I may long be permitted to work with you for the welfare and greatness of the Fatherland.” Moreover, so harmonious, to all appearance, were the relations between the young Emperor and his old Chancellor, ten months after the penning of this telegram, that Bismarck made bold to assure the Tsar, on the occasion of the latter’s visit to Berlin (autumn of 1889), that he (the Tsar) might confidently rely on his remaining in office, as a loyal friend of Russia, till the day of his death. But this Macbeth-like resolve of Bismarck to “die with harness on his back” he had been compelled to reverse within a few short months of its formation. How was that?

First of all, it was the old story of “crabbed age and youth who could not live together.” The Chancellor was verging towards his seventy-sixth year, while the Emperor was but only out of his thirtieth; and from the very first, few ever fancied that co-partnery in the work of politics between two such unequally aged men could ultimately end in anything but divergence and divorce. Had these men otherwise differed in personal character, there might have been some hope for their harmonious co-operation; but the worst of it was that in many respects they were both so much alike, and had little of the supplemental relationship such as makes a happy union, for example, between husband and wife. For they were both self-willed, ambitious, greedy of popular applause, imperious, and passionately fond of power.

It had become known that master and man were by no means in accord on the Socialist question—the Chancellor continuing to advocate a policy of sternest

repression, while the Emperor was anxious to try the experiment of milder measures. But they were still less in agreement on the question of Ministerial responsibility. Ever since his accession to power, in 1862, Bismarck had acted in accordance with a royal Cabinet Order, issued ten years previously, which, contrary to the mere letter of the Prussian Constitution, virtually made Ministers of the Crown primarily accountable to the Premier, as in England. Such a theory of government suited Bismarck to perfection, seeing that it gave him immediate control of all his Ministerial colleagues. Of all anomalies that were ever heard of, this surely was the most curious, that Bismarck had to come to England, the boasted land of democratic freedom, for a constitutional principle which should tend to strengthen his despotic power.

It will thus be seen that the issues opened up by this grave difference of opinion between the Emperor and the Chancellor were of very far-reaching scope. In fact, the best way of describing this personal difference is by saying that master and man had now begun to engage in a jealous struggle for power. To a certain extent, it was Ferdinand and his Wallenstein over again. The maintenance of the Cabinet Order in question, thought Bismarck, was well worth fighting for to the very last, seeing that he might as well retire from office altogether as relinquish the main source of his quasi-absolute power. High as was his opinion of his young master's qualities, he probably deemed him incapable of carrying things to an extremity between them, and imagined that a threat to resign, which had never failed of its intended effect on the old Emperor, would equally serve to bring his

recalcitrant grandson to his senses. But in this respect he was presently undeceived.

It had come to the ear of the Emperor that his Chancellor had granted a private interview to Dr. Windthorst, leader of the Clericals, and his Majesty was probably seized with the suspicion that this betokened some party-chaffering, on the Bismarckian *do ut des* principle, hostile to his own views—say on the Socialist or some other question. In any case, the Emperor at once sent Herr von Lucanus, his private secretary, to the Chancellor, with the message that he expected the Prince to let him know beforehand when he intended to receive deputies for the purpose of political discussion.

“Tell his Majesty,” replied Bismarck, “that I cannot allow anyone to decide who is to cross my own threshold.” This was on the 14th March, and next day (Saturday)—the very day on which the Labour Conference was to hold its first sitting—the Emperor drove at an early hour to the Radziwill Palace. The Chancellor, always a late riser, was not yet out of bed, but he at once made haste to dress and appear before his Imperial lord. The Emperor, who was in a state of some excitement, asked the Chancellor what had been the subject of his conversation with the Clerical Chief. The Prince replied that it was a private one, to which his Majesty rejoined that he was entitled to be timeously informed of negotiations between his Chancellor and a party-leader like Windthorst.

To this Bismarck returned (with rising temper, no doubt) that he could not subject his intercourse with deputies to any restraint, nor allow anyone to control

the passage of his door. "Not even when I, as your Sovereign, command you to do so?"* cried the Emperor, in great excitement. "The commands of my Sovereign," replied Bismarck, with a calm disdain, "end at the drawing-room of my wife"; adding that he had only remained in office in conformity with a promise which he had made to the old Emperor to serve his grandson, but that he was now quite willing to retire if his continuance in office was inconvenient to his Majesty.

Next day was a Sunday, and nothing was done. But on Monday morning (17th) the Emperor sent his military secretary this time, General von Hahnke, to the Chancellor to say that, as a consequence of the Saturday's conversation between them, his Majesty expected the Prince's resignation, and for that purpose would receive him at two o'clock. Things were beginning to look much more serious than the Chancellor had ever imagined they would; and now that he saw that the Emperor had taken him at his word—which he had never for a moment thought he would do—he began to hedge and hang back.

From purely political considerations, he said (to General von Hahnke), he would regard it as most unscrupulous conduct in himself, and treachery almost to his Kaiser and country, to desert his colours at such a juncture. Besides, the tendering of his own resignation

* According to another account, the Emperor replied to Bismarck's avowal that he would receive anybody he liked: "Oh, I see: *you* can receive anyone *you* like, but *I* mustn't receive my own Ministers without *your* permission!" The Emperor had his Chancellor there.

would give a false historical picture of the situation. The Emperor could at any moment dismiss him, but he (the Chancellor) could not conclude his political career with an act of which the consequences, in his opinion, would prove the "greatest misfortune that could afflict the nation." At the same time, after having thus "liberated his soul" to General von Hahnke, Bismarck summoned a meeting of the Prussian Cabinet to explain the situation.

Meanwhile, the Emperor, after receiving General von Hahnke's report, despatched Herr von Lucanus once more to the Radziwill Palace to re-demand the Chancellor's resignation by a certain hour, and at the same time offer him the title of Duke of Lauenburg, with a corresponding money dotation to keep up the new dignity. To this the Prince made answer that, if his ambition had lain that way, he could have become Duke of Lauenburg long ago; and that as for the money part of his Majesty's offer, his career had surely been such as to exempt him from the suspicion of being animated by the motives of letter-carriers who went round begging for gratuities on Boxing-day. With respect to his retirement from office, he was quite ready to accept his simple *congé*; but for the drawing up of a regular "request for leave to resign"—which must form the last official document of a Minister who had admittedly done so much as he for Germany and Prussia—for that he required some little time. This much he owed to himself and to history.

Accordingly, down sat the Chancellor to pen his enforced abdication on the 18th March, the fateful anniversary of the Berlin Revolution, but it was only about noon on the 20th that his Majesty was in possession of

the document. It was a very long and elaborate one, a review of the political situation, followed by a discussion of the reasons which would have made his retirement from office at that particular time seem to him unjustifiable in the interest of the State, in spite of his age and growing infirmities, but for his Sovereign's "express command" to that effect.

Soon after receiving this document—scarcely, in fact, before he could have had time to read and reflect upon its contents—the Emperor despatched his two secretaries to the Radziwill Palace, each with a separate missive for the Chancellor. That delivered by the Civil Secretary ran :

"My dear Prince,—With deep emotion, I have seen from your request of the 18th inst. that you are resolved to retire from the offices which you have held with incomparable success for so many years past. I had hoped not to be forced to meet the idea of our separation during our lifetime. If, however, I, fully conscious of the immense purport of your resignation, am now obliged to accept this idea, I do so with a sad heart, but with the firm hope that the granting of your request will contribute to save and to preserve, for the longest possible time, your life and your strength, so invaluable to the Fatherland.

"The reasons adduced by you for your decision have convinced me that further attempts to induce you to withdraw your request would be hopeless. I, therefore, concede your request by graciously accepting herewith your resignation of your offices as Imperial Chancellor, President of my Ministry of State, and Minister of Foreign Affairs, with the hope that your advice and energy, your fidelity and loyalty, will not be lacking to me and the Fatherland in future.

"I considered it one of the most favourable dispensations of my life that, on ascending the throne, I had

you as my first adviser by my side. What you have done and achieved for Prussia and Germany, what you have been to my house, my ancestors, and myself, will remain in my grateful and imperishable memory, and in that of the German nation, while your wise and energetic peace policy, which I am resolved, in accordance with my firm conviction, to maintain in the future also, will permanently and gloriously be remembered abroad.

"It is not in my power to reward your services according to their full value. I must, therefore, be satisfied by assuring you of my never-ending thanks, and of those of the Fatherland. I bestow on you the dignity of a Duke of Lauenburg as a sign of these thanks, and I shall send you my life-size portrait. May God bless you, my dear Prince, and give you still many years of a cloudless life, enlightened by the conviction of loyally fulfilled duty. In this sense, I remain your thankful Emperor and King, faithfully connected with you also in the future.

"WILHELM I.R.

"BERLIN, *March 20th*, 1890."

In the other missive his Majesty thanked Bismarck for his invaluable services to the Army in the time of his grandfather and afterwards, adding that he knew he would be at one with the Army by retaining him in the highest rank and appointing him Colonel-General of Cavalry, with the rank of Field-Marshal.

These Imperial letters were gazetted the same evening, together with the appointment of General Von Caprivi as Bismarck's successor. But it must now be said of them that they gave a wholly false impression of the circumstances under which the Emperor had parted with his Chancellor. For they led the world to believe that the Prince had resigned in spite of the repeated efforts of his sad-hearted Sovereign to retain him in office. "The reasons adduced by you for your decision," wrote

the Emperor, "have convinced me that *further attempts* to induce you to withdraw your request would be hopeless." What the nature of these first attempts were we have already seen. Indeed, the appearance of flagrant contradiction between what the Emperor said, and what he actually did, can only be accounted for by supposing that he had written his acceptance of the Chancellor's resignation *before* receiving it, and on the assumption that it would be worded differently from what it really was.

On the other hand, it was seen that Bismarck himself had made a total miscalculation of his own importance by referring to his resignation as one of the "greatest misfortunes" which could at that time befall the nation. The nation itself, at least, did not seem to think so; and the general impression in this respect was fairly well expressed by one financial organ, which remarked "that the sensitive aspen-leaves of the Bourse never so much as quivered at the news of the Prince's fall"—a fact which was all the more remarkable in view of the Emperor's youth and inexperience, the problematic nature of his character, and the riskiness of the experiments on which he seemed inclined to launch himself. The young Emperor had always been credited with courage, and now he had given a most signal proof of it. It is, indeed, impossible to imagine what higher proof of this quality he could ever have given, or can ever again give; and courage in this case was only another name for boundless self-confidence.

It was admitted on all sides that the new captain of the vessel had dropped his pilot rather brusquely, and

who that saw it will ever forget Mr. Tenniel's cartoon on the subject? But, after all, it was asked, would a stout ship-captain be worth the name if he allowed his authority on the quarter-deck to be usurped, or shared, by the man at the wheel? For that Palinurus-Bismarck had sought to do this, there can be no manner of doubt. In the course of time he had constituted himself a kind of omnipotent and overshadowing major-domo to the Hohenzollerns, but William II. was firmly minded to be King in his own castle. The power of the Prussian Crown had been greatly curtailed by the Revolution; but still further encroachments upon its prerogatives had been made by the Reichskanzler, and William II. determined to recover these Royal rights at the price even of his immortal Premier.

He felt that there was no longer any room in official Germany for himself and Bismarck too, and that there was an alarming amount of truth in the words which some sycophant—his own vanity, perhaps—had whispered in his ear: "Sire, if Bismarck had been Chancellor to your Majesty's ancestor, Frederick II, he never would have become 'the Great.'" Now, if any young Monarch had ever vowed in his heart to become great, it was certainly William the Second ("Second to None," said the satirists). Bismarck had once remarked to him that he was gifted enough to be his own Chancellor; but this was a word, spoken in jest, or rather in flattery, which he little dreamt of seeing realised, when his master at last came to him and said:

"Cassio, I love thee,
But never more be officer of mine."

Two days after parting with his Chancellor, the Emperor telegraphed to a friend at Weimar :

“Many thanks for your friendly letter. I have indeed gone through bitter experiences, and have passed many painful hours. My heart is as sorrowful as if I had again lost my grandfather! But it is so appointed to me by God; and it has to be borne, even though I should fall under the burden. The post of officer of the watch on the ship of State has fallen to my lot. Her course remains the same; so now, full-steam ahead!”

“As if I had again lost my grandfather!” Not father, be it noted, but father’s father! But the Emperor at least had betrayed none of this intense heart-sorrow on the day—the ever-memorable day (28th March, 1890)—when Bismarck made his exit from the scene in circumstances which caused him to remark, with a grim bitterness, that he had been “treated to a first-class funeral.” Everyone—ambassadors, generals, all ranks, dignities and conditions of men and women—streamed to the railway station, and struggled to kiss the hand, or catch a parting glance of the fallen Chancellor—all but the Emperor himself, who merely sent some officers of rank to say his last adieux, with a squadron of cuirassiers to act as a guard of honour to his new “Colonel-General.” Never have I witnessed such an indescribable scene of emotion as that which marked the passing of the great Chancellor on that balmy spring day. And never shall I forget the look of pained amazement which leapt into the eyes of men and women on their way back from the Lehrter Station, when, at the Brandenburg Thor, they encountered the Emperor himself placidly trotting home from his afternoon ride in the Thiergarten, and chatting

gaily to his aide-de-camp as if nothing unusual had occurred.

Little did the Germans then think that their fallen Chancellor was carrying with him to Friedrichsruh so great a sense of personal wrong, wounded vanity, and consuming discontent, as would make him turn and writhe in his official grave, and even quit it to hurl menaces and maledictions at those who had been the means of expelling him from power.

It sounds incredible, but in less than two months after Bismarck had left Berlin, the Emperor authorised his new Chancellor, General Caprivi, to address the following circular to all the representatives of Germany and Prussia abroad :—

“It will not have escaped your notice that the present sentiments and views of Prince Bismarck, Duke of Lauenburg, have been published in the Press. His Majesty’s Government, fully recognising the imperishable services of this great statesman, was able to maintain silence on this subject so long as those utterances were confined to personal matters and home policy ; but, now that foreign policy has been touched upon, it is forced to consider whether reserve is still advisable, and may not be open to injurious misinterpretation abroad. His Majesty the Emperor, however, is convinced that either a quieter state of feeling will set in, or that the true value of the matter reproduced by the Press will, in time, be gauged more justly abroad as well as at home ; and that there is no reason to fear any serious injury from remarks more or less correctly reproduced, and possibly distorted intentionally, addressed in part to persons known to be hostile to Germany. His Majesty distinguishes between Prince Bismarck as he was and Prince Bismarck as he is, and wishes his Government to avoid all that might tend to tarnish the German nation’s conception of its greatest statesman. In informing you of this, and authorising you

to express yourself if necessary to the above effect, I have the honour to formulate the hope that the Government to which you are accredited will attach no real weight to the comments of the Press on Prince Bismarck's views."

But in spite of this corrective circular—a copy of which must even have been addressed to the ex-Chancellor's own son-in-law, Count Rantzau, Prussian Minister at Munich—a perpetual stream of criticism, bearing on its bosom chips and even blocks of State secrets, kept flowing out from Friedrichsruh, and fertilising the waste places of national discontent. And ever and anon, when the Prince was warned that he was going too far, and referred to the example of his compeer in fame, Moltke—who was significantly rewarded for his splendid habit of silence by the visits and companionship of the Emperor, while his Majesty repeatedly passed and repassed Friedrichsruh without ever so much as stopping to inquire after the health of its lord—ever and anon, I say, the ex-Chancellor threatened to seek a seat in Parliament where he might speak and criticise to his heart's content.

Perhaps the subject of his bitterest criticism was the Anti-Socialist Law, which the Emperor, much against the advice of his ex-Chancellor, had allowed to drop. And for doing this his Majesty was threatened from Friedrichsruh "with a bloody cataclysm in the near future." Then, too, his Majesty's pet Labour Conference was described as a mere "*coup d'épée dans l'eau*," a "feast of phrases"—a fiasco from which the fallen Chancellor had vainly sought to save his "high falutin'" and impulsive young master. The Prince's favourite form of criticising the Emperor was to belaud his Majesty's predecessors,

and then suddenly stop without completing the parallel. For instance, "William the First could get angry, but his *politesse de cœur* never left him." "And then as to his grandson?"—oh, a mere "young dog frisking about in the sun," a "rich heir," and what would he do with his inheritance? "I pity the young man," he said, on another occasion; "he is like a young foxhound that barks at everything, that smells at everything, that touches everything, and that ends by causing complete disorder in the room in which he is, no matter how large it may be."

Bismarck had avowed that he felt no ill-will towards his young master, but his words at other times belied him. His heart continued full of bitterness towards the young monarch who had not only driven him from power "like a dog," but who also acted in such a way as to create the impression that he gloried in the fact. At least the public were certainly entitled to draw this conclusion from the ostentatious way in which the Emperor associated himself with the production at the Royal Schauspielhaus of a play called the *Neue Herr*, or the "New Ruler." This was his Majesty's own ancestor, the Great Elector, one of whose first acts, on succeeding to the throne, was to dismiss from office Adam von Schwarzenberg, his predecessor's Chancellor, and virtually take all the reins of power into his own reforming hands.

Was the dramatist's subject suggested to him, or did he choose it himself, taking, perhaps, his "master's humour for a warrant"? I know not; but what was patent to all the world was that the Emperor himself took the very

greatest interest in the matter and production of the piece, that he attended several rehearsals, and directed certain changes to be made; that he was foremost among the "first-nighters," and after the performance went behind the scenes to decorate the dramatist (Herr von Wildenbruch, a Foreign Office clerk) with the Red Eagle, besides showering studs, sleeve-links, breast pins, and other marks of favour on the principal actors; and that he afterwards frequently hastened away from evening parties to dote upon the spectacle of his own heroic features in the flattering mirror of the *Neue Herr*.

Criticism on this "ultra-loyal drama of the rowdy-dowdy type"—as one writer well called it—was practically dumb. Its literary value was beneath contempt, and the only thing about it worth considering was its obvious political parallelism. But few who went to see the play and observe the Emperor gloating over its various scenes, could refrain from shaking their heads and feeling more than sorry.

It was surely no wonder that the Emperor's ostentatious self-association with the *Neue Herr* should have produced the same painful impression at Friedrichsruh as it had created in Berlin, and that the relations between the "new master" and his former man now rapidly became worse—certainly *post hoc*, probably also *propter hoc*. "That will never do," his Majesty was reported to have said to the author of the *Neue Herr*, when attending its first rehearsal; "you must alter the play in this particular. When a Hohenzollern dismisses one of his Ministers, he loads him with honours all the same." The "Schwarzenberg," whom the "*Neue Herr*" had

dismissed, must have keenly felt the bitterness of this remark. But he had already shown the Emperor that he despised the empty honours which had been obtruded upon him. He had never yet called himself, nor allowed himself to be called, by his new title. "When I want to travel incognito," he once said with a sneer, "I shall call myself 'Duke of Lauenburg.'" On another occasion when the family were at lunch, a letter was brought in addressed to the "Duchess of Lauenburg." With an amused smile, Princess Bismarck handed the thing across the table to her husband. "Delighted to make your acquaintance, ma'am," said the Prince, with a ceremonious salute, as though he were being introduced to a perfect stranger.

It was in this way that a perpetual shower of Parthian shots was directed towards Berlin by the embittered exile of the Sachsenwald. To all remonstrances Bismarck merely replied that he could not, and would not, demean himself like a "dumb dog" on a "hibernating bear," and that, careless of the consequences, he would at all times, and on all subjects, indulge in the most perfect freedom of speech. In pursuance of this policy he virtually made himself the mouthpiece of the Opposition to the "new course" into which the Emperor had struck. But of all his criticisms, the one, perhaps, which stung his Majesty most was the Prince's declaration that, if he had been in office, he "would never have put his pen to such a pact" as the Anglo-German agreement with regard to Africa, based, among other things, on an excambion of the islands of Heligoland and Zanzibar. "If it was the will of the Emperor," he said, "that Heligoland should

be procured at all hazards, I think it might have been got cheaper." Bismarck, in fact, had accused the Imperial Government of truckling to England; but the Government's prompt reply to this charge was a revelation of the fact that, when the Prince himself was in office, he had added a marginal note to a despatch for the Ambassador in London, to the effect that the friendship of England "must be secured at almost any cost."

To other criticisms from Friedrichsruh the Emperor replied in an equally significant manner. The ex-Chancellor had accused his successor of throwing Russia into the arms of France, and above all things of sacrificing the agrarian interests of Germany to those of Austria. Bismarck had not long been out of office when it was seen that something must be done to remedy the evils of his extreme protectionist policy; and after long and difficult negotiations on the subject—which Bismarck, as the spokesman and spurrier-on of the malcontent portion of his countrymen, had done his best to thwart—Germany at last concluded a series of new commercial treaties with Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, and Italy—treaties which enabled the Empire to return to a moderately free trade, or, at least, fair-trade practice with her more important neighbours, and, in the words of M. Leroy-Beaulieu, transferred the commercial hegemony of the Continent from France to Germany. On the day after these treaties were approved by the Reichstag (December, 1891), the Emperor, at a banquet in Potsdam, thus replied, in an indirect yet unmistakable manner, to the rebellious *frondeur* of Friedrichsruh :

"The new Imperial Chancellor, that simple, homely Prussian General," said his Majesty, "had in two years succeeded in making himself conversant with and in mastering problems of extreme difficulty. With a rare political insight he had at the right moment saved the Fatherland from evil consequences. He (the Emperor) believed, however, that the achievement represented by the introduction and conclusion of the treaties of commerce was, for posterity, a most important historical event, an act of vital moment. The Reichstag, by a great majority, had shown that it recognised the far-seeing political vision of this man, and that it associated itself with him. The German Parliament had, by so acting, set up for itself a mark and monument in the history of the German Empire. Despite the insinuations and obstructions which the Imperial Chancellor and his (the Emperor's) advisers had encountered from various quarters, they had succeeded in guiding the Fatherland into new paths. I am convinced," said his Majesty in conclusion, "that not only our Fatherland, but millions of subjects of other countries which are united to us in the great Customs League, will sooner or later bless this day. I ask you to empty your glasses to the health of the Imperial Chancellor, his Excellency General Count von Caprivi, for to that rank I have this day raised the Imperial Chancellor in reward of his devoted and distinguished labours."

Such, then, was the way in which the Emperor eulogised and rewarded the man whose policy had been so hampered by the criticisms of his predecessor, and who had been sneered at by that predecessor as a mere "*ministre étranger—aux affaires.*" In the opinion of the ex-Chancellor, his successor was a dangerous bungler. On the other hand, by raising his new Chancellor to the rank of Count—the same rank as had been conferred on Bismarck himself after the war with Denmark—the

Emperor had wished to bring home to Caprivi's princely detractor his Majesty's belief in the fact that the sea still contained just as good fish as had ever been taken out of it.

But Count Caprivi was not the only object of the ex-Chancellor's hostile criticism whom the King delighted to honour. Herr Von Boetticher, Chief of the Imperial Home Office, whom the resentful exile of Friedrichsruh had endeavoured to ruin, was also taken under the Imperial wing in a manner still more ostentatious and significant. Boetticher, a very able man, had owed his rise in the official world to the patronage of the Prince; and by the Prince he was suspected of having, with base ingratitude, intrigued to bring about his benefactor's fall. As Bismarck, therefore, had ever boasted that it was his fine old custom to pay his enemies back in their own coin, no one had any doubt as to the *provenance* of the revelation that Boetticher had once accepted from a secret service fund, at the old Emperor's disposal, a very considerable sum of money to save a financial relative from ruin.

The divulgence of this State secret had a most damaging effect in more than one direction; and the Emperor cannot but have resented the malice which shrank not from a disclosure that implicated the spotless name of his own sainted grandsire. As for Boetticher himself, he hastened to resign. But the Kaiser would have none of it. He had previously conferred on Boetticher the Black Eagle, in recognition of his services in the cause of social reform; and as he had no higher decoration to pin upon his breast, he now lavished the

most marked personal attentions both upon the Minister and his wife, compelling him to remain in office in spite of the malignant revelations of his foes.

But it was only when Bismarck, in the summer of 1892, repaired to Vienna to attend the wedding of his son, Count Herbert—who had previously been Foreign Secretary, but left office with his father—that he was to learn to what extent he had incurred the displeasure of the Emperor. The ex-Chancellor's journey to Vienna had taken the form of a popular triumph, which the Prince could refer to as proving that, if he had forfeited the favour of his Sovereign, he at least continued to enjoy the respect, and even adoration, of his fellow-subjects. But on reaching the Kaiserstadt, what was the Prince's rage on finding that the Emperor Francis Joseph coldly and curtly declined to receive him, and that all the official world avoided him as if he were the plague. This to the once high and mighty German Chancellor, the author of the Austro-German Alliance! Was it possible? Was it credible? What was the meaning of it all?

The meaning of it all was clearly explained a few weeks later by the publication of the despatch which Count Caprivi, by express desire of the Emperor, had addressed to Prince Reuss, Ambassador at Vienna, on the eve of the Bismarck wedding:—

“In view of the approaching wedding of Count Herbert Bismarck in Vienna, I have the honour, after reporting to his Majesty, to communicate to you the following: As regards the rumours of a *rapprochement* between his Majesty the Emperor and Prince Bismarck, the one indispensable condition—the taking of the first step by

the ex-Chancellor—is wanting. But even if such a step were taken, the *rapprochement* could never go so far as to entitle public opinion to suppose that Prince Bismarck had regained any influence over the conduct of affairs. Should the Prince or his family make any approach to you, pray confine yourself to conventional forms of courtesy. This order is also to be observed by the staff of the Embassy. I may add that his Majesty will take no notice of the wedding. You are instructed to inform Count Kalnoky of this at once, in the form that seems best to you.”

It was not till some little time later that this despatch was given to the world, together with the circular previously quoted, and then, too, only after Bismarck, on leaving Vienna, had poured out his soul in another flood of bitterness to several interviewers at Kissingen and other places in South Germany. The world fairly stood dumbfounded at this retaliatory act on the part of the Emperor, who gaily hastened off to Norway to indulge in the pastime of harpooning whales before he could gather the effect which his boycotting of the Bismarcks was calculated to produce on public opinion, or listen to the assurance of the professors of Jena—where the object of his Majesty’s persecution was received with boundless enthusiasm—that they, at least, did not distinguish between the ex-Chancellor “as he was, and as he is.”

Had it really, then, come to this between the founder of the Empire and its present ruler? There were, indeed, many who thought it not at all improbable that the already long list of sensations and surprises which had marked the Emperor’s short reign would yet be swelled by a State-prosecution of the man who had prosecuted

his rival, Count Harry Arnim, for the revelation of State secrets. It was, indeed, deemed to be more than a gentle hint to the irrepressible critic of Friedrichsruh—a sort of “prologue to the omen coming on”—when Count Limburg-Stirum, an ex-diplomatist, was put upon his trial and severely sentenced for mildly writing, merely, against those commercial treaties which had formed the object of Bismarck’s bitter denunciation. *Quod licet Jovi, non licet bovi*—the Emperor may have thought when he ordered so stern an example to be made of the critical Count. But though he hastened to pardon this former servant of the State, after formal sentence had been passed upon him, the prosecution, all the same, was thought to indicate a resolution on the part of his Majesty to draw a limit to his toleration of the Jupiter Tonans of Friedrichsruh.

Nevertheless, the lightnings continued, as before, to play around this Thundering Jove’s Olympus-top in the Sachsenwald. “Reconciliation, if you like,” he said to a friend, “but freedom of speech all the same.” Had he not, on the occasion of his last great appearance in the Reichstag, emphatically declared that “we Germans fear God and nothing else in the world”? And was he now to be afraid of the Kaiser of the Germans? It was no wonder that he felt more bitterly than ever towards the Emperor, after the latter’s publication of the Vienna despatch. Bismarck would have needed to be more than human to forgive—not to say forget—this; while, on the other hand his Majesty, having once unmasked this advanced battery, was bound in all consistency to stick to his guns—for a decent interval, at least.

Repeated attempts were made by some exalted persons

—including Prince Albrecht of Prussia, Regent of Brunswick—to bring about a reconciliation that would relieve the Fatherland from a reproach and a scandal which weighed heavily on the hearts of all true patriots, but in vain. The psychological moment had not yet arrived, and meanwhile it could only be hoped, either that the better genius of Bismarck himself would prevail, or that his past achievements, rising up in dazzling array before the mind of the Emperor like the procession of the kings in *Macbeth*, would lull his Majesty into a grandly magnanimous forbearance towards the illustrious hero and maker of the German nation, whose foibles, after all, were but the natural counterpart of his force.

The nation had not very long to wait for the realisation of its hopes. In the autumn of 1893, when at Güns, in Hungary, attending the manœuvres with his Austrian ally, the Emperor learned that his ex-Chancellor had been seized with a serious illness at Kissingen. His heart was touched, and he telegraphed to the Prince:—

“I have, only now, to my great regret, learned that your Highness has lately gone through a somewhat serious illness. As I have, at the same time, thank God! received news of a continued improvement, I beg to express my warmest satisfaction on this account. Being anxious to assist in thoroughly completing your recovery and re-establishing your health, I beg your Highness, in view of the unfavourable climatic situation of Varzin and Friedrichsruh, to take up your quarters for the winter in one of my castles in Central Germany. After conferring with my Court Marshal, I will communicate to your Highness the name of the castle which may be most suitable.”

This conciliatory telegram was purely spontaneous so

far, though the unfortunate estrangement between the Emperor and his ex-Chancellor had certainly formed the subject of previous conversations between his Majesty and the King of Saxony, as well as the Emperor Francis Joseph. It is equally certain that the Grand Duke of Baden profited by the opportunity of frequent intercourse with his Imperial nephew during the previous manœuvres in Alsace-Lorraine, and elsewhere in South Germany, to represent to him the satisfaction that would be felt by all the nation at a reconciliation between his Majesty and the Prince. And if there were two men in all Germany who had more influence than any others over the young Emperor, those two men were his uncle, the Grand Duke of Baden, and the King of Saxony. It was to the latter that the Emperor Frederick, before his death, confided the personal care of his eldest son in a most especial manner; and it was known that the Emperor, on more than one occasion, had appealed to, and been guided by, the sagacious counsel of King Albert.

But the hopes of the Germans were somewhat dashed by the reply which Bismarck at once returned to the Emperor's gracious offer—a reply which, with all its studied expressions of respect and gratitude, was thought to reveal some lingering vestige of soreness at the treatment which he had received at the hands of his Majesty. "My respectful gratitude," he wrote, "for your Majesty's gracious intentions is in no way diminished by the conviction that, if it be God's will that I should recover, that recovery is more likely to be looked for in the domestic circle and surroundings to which I have so long been accustomed."

In fact, the Emperor's offer was declined with thanks, and there was considerable ground for believing that its rejection filled his Majesty's heart with a feeling akin to the *spretæ injuria formæ*. To this feeling the Emperor was supposed by many to have given veiled expression when, a month later, he delivered himself of one of his most glowing and hero-worshipping speeches at the unveiling, in Bremen, of a monument to his grandfather, on the birthday of his father. On this occasion he eulogised the latter, "the Crown Prince *Kat' éxochén*," more than he had ever done before, representing him as having taken a share in the creation of the Empire which had been denied him by Bismarck. "His German sword in hand, the son won for his father on the blood-stained field the Imperial Crown of Germany. To his ponderous hammer-strokes we owe it that the Emperor's armour was firmly welded." And then as to the old Emperor—

"How wondrously the providence of God led him! . . . What unexpected successes did he not, with God's help, achieve! To him was it appointed by God to fulfil the aspirations of all Germans, and with the victoriously-won Imperial Crown to give back to Germany her unity. For this task he had to find great men who should share in the honour of carrying out his ideas and co-operating with him as his counsellors."

These words had been spoken *to* the people of Bremen, but it was gravely suspected that they had been uttered *at* some one else. In speaking thus, William II. had represented his grandfather and his father as the chief architects of the Reich, which they certainly were not. Far from the old Emperor "seeking for great men who should share in the honour of carrying out his ideas,"

it was only with the utmost difficulty sometimes that Bismarck could get his Majesty to act upon the advice which he gave him. "If you only knew," said the Chancellor to an opponent, on the eve of the Austrian War, "what a frightful struggle it has cost me to persuade his Majesty to fight, you would also comprehend that I am obeying the iron law of necessity." Certainly, if any monarchs ever had greatness thrust upon them, it was William I. and his son Frederick III. But as Moltke once said: "All that can be published of the history of war is necessarily coloured by the event. But it is a pious and patriotic duty never to disturb the prestige which connects the glory of our Army with certain high personages."*

But if, on the festive occasion above alluded to, the fine old Rhenish from the famous cellars of the Bremen Rathhaus had anything to do with the perversion of German history, it was now to play a compensating rôle as the pacificator of Germany's greatest history-maker. For about three months after the Bremen festival, when Bismarck was recovering from a severe attack of influenza, what should astonish him one fine day but the sudden arrival at Friedrichsruh of Lieut.-Colonel von Moltke, a nephew of the great "Battle-thinker," bearing in his hand a second olive-leaf from the Emperor in the form of a bottle of the very finest old Marcobrunner Cabinet which could be fished out of the royal cellars, and with the wine an expression of earnest hope, on the part of its Imperial donor, that it would contribute to the reconvalescence of the suffering ex-Chancellor.

* Quoted by his nephew in the preface to Moltke's *History of the French War*.

The lovers' quarrel was at an end. All Germany was more or less intoxicated with that rare old flask of Hock. Within four days of its delivery at Friedrichsruh, Bismarck had come to Berlin to thank the Emperor in person for the gift, and been kissed and hugged by his Majesty with all the fervour of a penitent lover who has suddenly become reconciled to his petulant mistress. Rarely or never since the triumphal entry of the troops, after the French War, had the Linden Avenue been packed with such multitudes as gathered to witness the outward signs of all this *redintegratio amoris*. The world had been again reminded in the most striking manner that wonders, truly, would never cease. Bismarck was received in Berlin with sovereign honours; there is no other way of describing the attentions that were showered upon him. In room of the lately deceased Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, he was made chief of the Cuirassier regiment of which he had hitherto been merely *à la suite*; he was fetched from the station in great state by Prince Henry, and conducted back to it by the Emperor himself—a parting compliment which his Majesty had failed to pay his ex-Chancellor on the occasion of the latter's "first-class funeral"; and otherwise there were no bounds to his Majesty's melting generosity and love.

In less than a month after this extraordinary re-union of hearts, the Emperor returned the Prince's visit at Friedrichsruh, just as if the ex-Chancellor had been one of his fellow-Sovereigns; and a little later, on the occasion of the Prince's seventy-ninth birthday, his Majesty sent him a magnificent steel cuirass. "May the solid steel," he wrote, "which is to cover your breast be regarded as

the symbol of German gratitude, which enfolds you with its steadfast loyalty, and to which I, too, desire to give my eloquent expression." "I shall don this new breast-plate," replied the Prince, "as the symbol of your Majesty's gracious favour, and leave it to my children as a lasting memento of the same."

Certainly, the Emperor had never done a finer or more felicitous thing than this taking of Bismarck back into his bosom. For not only had his Majesty now, to all appearance, conquered back the heart of his old Chancellor; he had also completed his hold over the hearts of those of his subjects who might have hitherto been dubious or divided in their love, and, for the time being, he had become the most popular man in his Empire. On the other hand, no one ever seriously imagined that Bismarck would ever be reinstalled in office, as well as restored to the personal favour of his lord. But though the reconciliation of the two was a purely personal event, it could not fail to have political consequences in the abating of certain causes of friction which had hitherto interfered with the smooth working of the Imperial machine. And it was here, perhaps, where the Emperor's magnanimity had savoured more of calculation than of a *coup de cœur*. For, apart from the natural feelings of his heart, he had gradually come to realise that his quarrel with the ex-Chancellor had been a huge political mistake. It had been in his Majesty's power to drive the Chancellor from office, but here his driving power was at an end. He found it quite impossible to expel the Prince from the place which, with all his faults, he still continued to hold in the hearts of his countrymen, and he perceived that

his feud with the Creator of the Empire had seriously divided the allegiance of his subjects.

The cries of "Hi-Bismarck!" "Hi-Kaiser!" had begun to resound throughout the Reich, as in the old contentious days of Guelph and Ghibelline. The Emperor felt that he had difficulties enough to face without aggravating them by the inconvenience—the positive danger—of a continued conflict with so powerful a personality as his ex-Chancellor. As Bismarck himself had found it impossible to go on ruling the Empire without concluding peace with invincible Rome, so the Emperor himself found it almost equally impossible to govern without becoming reconciled to the founder of the Reich. The "rich heir" could not afford to imperil his popularity by the continuance of his quarrel with the *Mehrer des Reichs*—the amplifier of his inheritance.

When the tide of the Emperor's displeasure had at last turned, it began to flow again towards Friedrichsruh in an overwhelming volume of favour. His Majesty does nothing by halves. His hatreds and his loves are of the most extreme kind. Between boycotting Bismarck at Vienna, and treating him like a fellow-Sovereign at Berlin, he knew no mean. His Majesty resembled Dr. Johnson, who claimed the liberty of abusing Boswell to his heart's content, but would permit no one else to do so. Thus when, on the occasion of the Prince's eightieth birthday (1895), a majority in the Reichstag—composed of the party elements (Clericals, Radicals, and Socialists) which had always suffered most from his persecution—negatived a motion for authorising the President to convey to the ex-Chancellor the congratulations of the

whole House ; when the Reichstag did this, I say, the Emperor flew into a towering rage, and telegraphed to Friedrichsruh the expression of his "most profound indignation at the resolution adopted," which his Majesty declared to be in "complete opposition to the feelings of all German princes and peoples."

Most probably it was. But what, then, it was asked by the organs of the Opposition, had been the feelings of all German princes and peoples when, two and a-half years previously, the Emperor himself had ordered the publication of the boycotting despatch? Was the conduct of the Reichstag now worse than his Majesty's conduct then? Was it not even more consistent? Besides, had this "indignation" message of his Majesty not betrayed an attitude of mind towards the representatives of the German people painfully similar to that which induced Louis XIV. to saunter into the midst of the French Chamber with a riding-whip in his hand?

. But the measure of his Majesty's "indignation" did not end here, and he determined to eat hot the dish of his revenge. In consequence of the anti-Bismarck vote referred to, the Presidents of the Reichstag had at once resigned ; and their successors, representing the majority which had negatived that motion, were "commanded" to appear at a grand Court banquet in honour of the Prince's birthday, when they had to stand up with the rest of the company and join in the cheers for which his Majesty called in toasting the octogenarian object of their parliamentary aversion. This was retaliation of the most exquisite kind, reminding one of the King who compelled one of his courtiers to drain the poisoned

chalice which the latter had mixed for his Majesty, or of the English bard who accompanied "proud Edward" to the North to sing his royal master's victory over Bruce, but was captured at Bannockburn and compelled, as the ransom of his life, to chant the triumph of the Scots.

The representatives of the German people had had their say, and now the representative of the German Army would have his. "Liberty, equality, and fraternity," might be the motto of other countries; but "infantry, cavalry, and artillery" were still re-united Germany's only source of true salvation. Accordingly the Emperor, taking with him the Crown Prince, started off from Berlin by special train, and, alighting at a station beyond Friedrichsruh, he there placed himself at the head of a combined force of all arms—including a squadron of the Seydlitz (Bismarck) Cuirassiers, all the way from the Harz country—which he had ordered to muster in a meadow against the hour of his coming; and then, with bands playing and colours flying, his Majesty, in his bravest of uniforms, gallantly led on this little host through the budding glades of the Sachsenwald as if to capture the Castle of Friedrichsruh, or at least re-capture the love and allegiance of its once rebellious lord.

"Who is he that cometh like an honoured guest,

With banners, and with music, with soldier, and with priest?"

the startled exile of the Sachsenwald may well have muttered, on hearing his peaceful solitudes thus ringing with all this hurly-burly pomp and resonance of approaching war! But these stirring sounds of drum and trumpet of trampling charger, and rumbling cannon-wheels, were not half so resonant of war as the fiery words which

the Emperor hastened to address to the re-conquered object of his adoration, when at last the troops had received the ex-Chancellor with full military honours, and ranged themselves around him in a hollow square to give the due stage-setting to his Majesty's presentation of a magnificent sword of honour engraved with the arms of Alsace-Lorraine as well as the Prince's own :

"You may see, with the mind's eye, behind these troops, the great array of the German peoples, who are celebrating this day with us. With that host around us, I come to deliver to your Serene Highness a gift. I could find no better present than a sword—the noblest weapon of the Germanians—a symbol of that instrument which your Highness, with my blessed grandfather, helped to forge, to sharpen, and also to wield—a symbol of that great building-time during which the mortar was blood and iron, a remedy which never fails, and which in the hands of Kings and Princes will, in case of need, also preserve unity in the interior of the Fatherland, even as, when applied outside the country, it led to internal union."

Bismarck had once said that the German Army represented the German people much better than their Parliament, and now the Emperor had expressed the same opinion. But what was to be thought of this most astonishing allusion of his to the possibility of the "nation in arms" being pitted against the "nation in eloquence"? The ominous words, addressed to the old Reichskanzler by the Emperor, in the centre of a bristling square of swords and bayonets, were at the same time spoken at the Reichstag. But swords and squares continued to furnish the flaming imagery which

his Majesty employed to express his feelings at the ensuing repast when he rose, to the accompaniment of a thundering salvo of artillery, to toast the hero of the day, the accomplishment of whose mighty task "the Army," at least, he said, "had never denied." Whatever the Reichstag might do or say, should a man's merits not be measured by the fruit of his labours?

"*'Spectemur agendo,'* as my English Dragoon Regiment wrote with proud self-consciousness on its standard when, after riding down the enemy's square, it captured their colours. This motto can serve as an answer to everything that your Serene Highness's enemies and detractors may say or do. But we who to-day joyfully, and with admiration, fête your Highness as a comrade and colleague, with heartfelt thanks to God, who permitted you to complete such splendid work under our glorious old Kaiser, one and all join in the cry which all Germans, from the snowclad Alps to the dykes of the Belt, where the breakers thunder and roar, will shout with glowing hearts—Prince Bismarck, Duke of Lauenburg! *Er lebe hoch! Hurrah!*"

The Emperor's rupture with and reconciliation to Bismarck formed one of the strangest and most sensational dramas of real life in modern times; and it is for this reason that I have accorded it so ample a space in my narrative. Was it quite perfect and unreserved—the re-union of hearts which ended this astonishing drama, and which the Emperor on his part had sought to cement as if with the sword of Excalibur, as well as seal with a golden seal taken from the writing-table of his sainted grandsire? Or was the ex-Chancellor, who had offered his cheek to the Imperial kiss of reconciliation only the ghost of his former self?

CHAPTER VIII.

SAVIOUR OF SOCIETY.

Politics *versus* chemistry—"O, ye men of Brandenburg!"—A *roi de gueux*—A Red-Cross Knight—A prophecy of Moltke—"Equalising unhealthy social contrasts"—"The King of Prussia is above all parties"—An Accident Exhibition—Great mining strike—King Labour and King Law—The Kaiser as "honest broker"—New Anti-Socialist Law—Labour Rescripts—Labour conference—An Imperial Tory Democrat—Thomas Burt and Jules Simon on the Emperor—A "feast of phrases"—"*In magnis voluisse sat est*"—The Labour Rescripts and the Socialists—"Ballots are yours, bullets are mine"—Labour and other reforms—"Oceans of printer's ink"—The Emperor's domestic allies—Concessions to the Church—The Kaiser's "Labour-day" order—School reform—An Educational Conference—"Suum cuique"—A School Bill and its sad fate—Shuffling of the Ministerial pack—The Kaiser's advice to all "nagglers"—Parable of Sir Francis Drake—A new Army Bill—Appeal from Demosthenes to Demos—Absurdity of the representative system—*Attentat* on the Kaiser and Caprivi—Commercial Treaty with Russia—Exasperation of the Agrarians—"Spoken like a true nobleman!"—The Kaiser declines to be a "bread-usurer"—"*Noblesse oblige*"—Agriculture *versus* Anarchy—A red-rag redolent of petroleum—Special meeting of Federal Council—Resignation of Counts Caprivi and Eulenburg—The meaning of all this—Caprivi's deserts, and the Kaiser's "undying gratitude"—Prince Hohenlohe the new Chancellor—Socialist scene in the new House of Parliament—The Kaiser commits a grave mistake—An Anti-Revolution Bill and its fate—"Ohne Kanitz, keine Kahne!"—The Elbe-Kiel Canal—The Kaiser's Seven Years' War—"Everyone to Heaven in his own way"—Jesuits and Jews—The Emperor on his Semitic subjects—Dismissal of Court Chaplain Stocker—"Ahlwardt scandals" in the Reichstag—Limits to the Kaiser's "paternal benevolence"—The Duke of Cumberland and the "Reptile Fund"—Settlement

of old accounts—The Kaiser's "Heinze Rescript"—He denounces gambling, but encourages State-lotteries, and eulogises duelling—Strange case of a Brandenburg General and a Berlin Jew—The cold-shouldering of Virchow and the complimenting of Helmholtz—The Kaiser and the consumption cure—The forcing of Koch's hand and the "fizzling out" of his cure—The Kaiser's "Ode to Ægir"—Quidde's "Caligula: A Study in Roman-Cæsarian Madness"—An Imperial Crichton.

ONE of the causes which had led to Bismarck's dismissal from office was the ever-widening divergence between him and his *Neue Herr* in the field of economic reform. Both aimed at being latter-day Saviours of Society, but by different methods. "I believe," said the Emperor, "that I have mastered the aims and impulses of the new spirit which thrills the expiring century." But to a French journalist, on the other hand, Bismarck had declared :

"My young master is ardent and active; he wants to secure the happiness of those over whom he rules, and of mankind in general. Such a feeling is natural at his time of life; at mine, doubts as to the feasibility of schemes for the benefit of mankind are excusable. I frankly told him so. It is quite natural that an old Mentor like myself should have displeased him, and that my advice should have proved unpalatable. A steady old dray-horse and a young racer cannot pull well together. But then politics and chemistry are different things: politics have men for their factors, and not chemical combinations. For my part, I shall be glad if the experiments prove successful."

"O, ye men of Brandenburg," the Emperor-King had exclaimed soon after his accession, "we are called to greatness, and to glorious days will I lead you." Not content with being the first soldier and foremost sailor of his age, he would also, in his capacity as a heaven-

appointed King, aim at becoming the Saviour of modern Society. The King of the Prussians would also become a *roi de gueux*. Improving on the policy of Henry IV. of France, who had promised to put a chicken into every man's pot, William II. of Prussia would also bring peace and happiness home to every man's door. He would make his subjects God-fearing, King-revering, prosperous, and contented. The field of peace, so to speak, would be his field of battle, and he would gem the crown of the Hohenzollerns with a brighter jewel than had ever been added to it by the power of the sword. The duties of Monarchy had now become very different from what they had been in the days of Frederick the Great, and if the heir of the ages could not show that he had mastered the spirit of his time, he would have to become its martyr. Therefore, like the Red Cross Knight in the "Faerie Queen," William II. would ride forth to do strenuous battle for the distressed, and he would begin by seeking out—with intent to slaughter, strangle, smite down somehow, and render innocuous—the roaring Dragon of Social Democracy, the most perilous of all the monsters that infested his dominions.

In addition to being the greatest soldier of his time, Moltke had also been the greatest seer. For when at Versailles in 1871, he had predicted that Socialism, far more than France, would be Germany's greatest enemy in the future, and that in the course of time the revengeful animosity of the French would be diverted from Germany against England. How the latter part of this prophecy has already come true to the letter, all English-

men must sufficiently know ; while as to the rest of it, no one was more convinced of its verity than William II. on ascending the throne. It would, he knew, be comparatively easy for him to keep the peace abroad ; but at home—ah ! that was a very different matter. At any rate, it is certain that the young Kaiser was far more apprehensive that the peace of his Empire would be jeopardised within than without. On the whole, there was less chance of his reign being disturbed by a coalition of hostile Powers than by an armed conflict between labour and capital. It was not so much the spirit of revengefulness on the part of the French, as the growing spirit of revolution on the part of his own subjects, which the young Emperor had to fear ; and from the very first day of his ascending the throne, all his domestic policy aimed, more or less directly, either at combating or at conjuring this dangerous spirit.

In his first speech from the throne, the Emperor had spoken of his sympathy for the wants of the working classes, and of his great desire to help in “equalising unhealthy social contrasts.” But with the carrying out of this programme his Majesty made a most unfortunate beginning. For as the Red Cross Knight which he had now become, he took the oath as protector of the Beneficent Order of the Knights of St. John ; and at a banquet following on a chapter of the Order at Sonnenburg, his Majesty referred to his “lofty ideals” of reform, and said : “In the task of elevating the social, moral, and religious condition of the people, I require the assistance of the noblest elements among them—my nobility, whom I now see assembled before me in such

stately array as Knights of St. John." "What? Call you that an 'equalising of unhealthy social contrasts'?" at once cried out a large number of voices; and even Gustav Freytag, the great writer, the friend and confidant of Kaiser Frederick, snatched up his pen to protest against the Imperial assumption that one portion of the Prussian people was a whit nobler by nature than the rest.

Again, the Emperor had said: "The King of Prussia stands so high above parties and party conflict that, seeking the best interests of all, he is in a position to make the welfare of every individual, and every province in his kingdom, his care." Yet on going to Breslau to receive the allegiance of Silesia, he greeted the Radical Burgomaster, who had loyally come to welcome his Majesty at the station, with the words, "I am glad that the elections have turned out so well here, and that, for the first time, the Cartel-parties (Conservative) have won a victory" over the Radicals, who had hitherto represented the city in the Prussian Diet. That was what his Majesty said to the astonished Burgomaster, though he was much more complimentary to a deputation of loyalist working-men, representing ten thousand of their class, who had treated their royal reformer to a torch-light procession. This was the first vote of confidence, said the Emperor, which the working-men of all creeds had passed in his favour, and he trusted that their loyalty would prove infectious among their fellow-labourers throughout the Monarchy.

This was in November, 1888; and in the spring of the following year, the Emperor took occasion to re-

asseverate his warmest sympathy with the aims of the working classes when opening, at Berlin, an Exhibition of all kinds of devices for the prevention of accidents. But there was one kind of disaster for which no deviceful inventor seemed to have provided, and that was the disaster of a strike. For the Emperor had scarcely left the Accident Exhibition when he was informed that a strike had broken out among the miners of Rhineland and Westphalia—an indignant throwing-down of picks and spades which soon extended to 100,000 bread-winners, or more than three Army Corps on a war footing. The men were stubborn; their masters were inflexible; the distress was great; millions were being lost; while riot and violence at last reached such a pitch that it became a question with the Government whether the striking districts should not be placed under a state of siege.

But when things were at their worst a deputation of three Westphalian miners—fine, burly, honest fellows, true princes of the pick—hied them to Berlin, and went clumping into the presence of the Emperor—King Labour come to lay his complaints before King Law.

“What want you?” quoth his Majesty, with the mingled light of mildness and severity in his eye.

“We demand, sire, what we inherited from our fathers—the eight-hours’ shift. On a rise of wages we do not lay so much stress. Our masters must treat with us; we are not mulish. Let but your Majesty speak a word, and things will be different; many a tear will be dried.”

Then out and spake the Kaiser :

“Every subject who has a desire to express has, of course, the ear of his Emperor. I have shown this in

giving you permission to come here and tell your wants personally. But let me tell you that have put yourselves in the wrong, your movement is against the law, if only because you have not abided by the fourteen-days' notice required to be given before striking. You have, therefore, broken your contract. Naturally this breaking of your engagement has irritated the employers, and does them a wrong. Furthermore, workmen who did not desire to strike have been prevented from working either by violence or threats. . . .

"As for your demands, I will have them considered by my Government, and let you know the result. But should there be any more riotings and breaches of the peace; should it turn out that there is any Socialist connection with the movement, then it will be impossible for me to weigh your wishes with my royal good-will; for to me every Social Democrat is synonymous with a foe of the Reich and the Fatherland. If, therefore, I perceive that there are any Socialist tendencies in the movement, stirring up to unlawful resistance, I shall act with merciless rigour, and bring to bear all the power at my disposal—which is great. Home with you now, and reflect on what I have said."

To an ensuing deputation of employers the Emperor was equally plain-spoken :

"I beg of you, take pains to give working-men a chance to present their grievances in a formal manner. . . . It is natural and human that each one should seek to better himself. Workmen read newspapers, and know the relation that their wages bear to the profits of the company. It is obvious that they should desire to have some share of this."

All this, surely, was Kingship in its oldest and highest form, reminding one of the time when the royal patriarchs would sit under their oak-trees and listen to the grievances of all comers, meting out arbitration with a

rough-and-ready hand. According to one version, the Emperor sternly threatened to have all peace-breakers in the striking districts shot down like so many wild animals if they hearkened not unto his word ; but in any case his mingled firmness and impartiality had the due effect alike on masters and on men ; and his Majesty, in his high capacity of "honest broker," was well entitled to claim the credit of a brilliant and beneficent victory in the field of peace.

"Take care of that man ; he means what he says," was what Benjamin Disraeli had remarked of Herr von Bismarck on hearing him set forth his plans for the regeneration of Germany, and that was also precisely what the Socialists now began to feel about Kaiser William II.

I have thought it right to detail this incident at some length, because it will enable me to be all the briefer in my references to the future policy of the Emperor in this particular field. For his speeches and action on this occasion may be taken to reflect his whole future attitude to the Socialist question. As in the reign of his grandfather, so in his time also, reform would go hand in hand with repression, though in the latter respect the Emperor was willing to be a little less rigorous than his Iron Chancellor, who had championed the Anti-Socialist Law of October, 1878 (passed after the second attempt on the life of the old Emperor). Voted for a provisional period of three years, this Draconic measure had been repeatedly renewed, but on 30th September, 1890, it was to run once more to the end of its tether, and it therefore behoved the Government to provide

either for its continuance, or for its substitution by something else.

Tired with the bother of getting it renewed by Parliament from time to time, the Government now elected to ask for a permanent Anti-Socialist Law, which, though in some respects a great improvement on the provisional one in point of mildness, nevertheless retained the highly repressive clause relating to the local expulsion of suspected or obnoxious characters. After long and passionate debates the Reichstag rejected this bill, though it would certainly have been voted had the Government been willing to drop its expulsion clause. The Emperor himself was prepared to make this sacrifice, but Bismarck would not hear of it, and once more his Majesty allowed himself to be overruled by his imperious Chancellor. But it was the last time he was to do so.

Within a week after the rejection of the Anti-Socialist Bill, the Emperor—in his character as *roi de gueux*—had flashed out his Labour Rescripts upon an astonished and, on the whole, an admiring Europe. One of these was addressed to Prince Bismarck, and the other to the Prussian Ministers of Commerce and of Public Works, and the two combined constituted a proposal to summon to Berlin a Conference of all the industrial Powers to discuss the question of an international regulation of labour.

This Labour Conference sat for a fortnight (15th to 28th March, 1890), and ended by formulating a series of pious wishes, or recommendations, on the regulation of work in mines, of Sunday labour, of children's labour,

of work for youths, and of female labour. Its discussions had been purely academic, resembling the debates of the International Peace and Arbitration Society. Since the foundation of the Empire, and the consequent transfer of the centre of political gravity of the European system from the banks of the Seine to the banks of the Spree, Berlin had been the scene of many Conferences, but of none like this. It had, indeed, been less a Conference than a kind of social science conversazione interspersed with banquets, at which M. Jules Simon, the chief French delegate, would "drink to all who suffer!"

The Prince of Wales happened to be at this time in Berlin—returning the visit, on behalf of his mother, which the Emperor had paid the Queen, at Osborne, in the previous autumn, and there were grand Court fêtes in honour of his Royal Highness. To some of these functions the Labour delegates were also invited; and thus it came to pass that, for the first time in their history, the polished parquet-floors of the Royal Schloss resounded with the heavy tread of German locksmiths from the Rhine, French Socialists from Montmartre, and burly miners from Tyneside, who went gaping and staring about amid all this oppressive Court grandeur with a feeling of "Lord 'a mercy on us, this is none of I!"

On the closing day of the Conference, the chief delegates were treated to a free-and-easy "beer-evening" at the Schloss, when the Emperor conversed in the most affable manner with his guests, and impressed them all with his remarkable grasp of their subject. Sir John Gorst, in particular, was struck by his Majesty's absolute mastery of all questions relating to the work of the

Conference ; while as for shrewd Mr. Thomas Burt, M P., what said he when asked for his impression of the Emperor ?

“ Well, I think his general appearance argues a want of weight and balance. His head betokens energy rather than breadth. But he struck me as sincere. He is extremely well-informed. He talked with all the representatives, each in his own language. The Frenchmen were very much astonished at the excellent way in which he spoke their tongue. He has certainly energy—perhaps too much—but the Hohenzollerns have always made reigning a business, and have conducted it with the same laboriousness, the same industry, and the same activity, as a man pursues a professional career.”

Then, take the following pen-and-ink portrait of the Emperor from the hand of M. Jules Simon, to whom his Majesty was always most exquisitely considerate, presenting him, on his departure from Berlin, with a complete copy of the musical works of Frederick the Great :

“ If I had met him without knowing his quality I should have taken him for a young officer, trim and alert. His face is agreeable, his air affable and full of kindness. His chestnut hair has blonde and golden gleams. . . . The Emperor had but little colour. He gave me rather the idea of one of our young Norman nobles. He had their affability and their gaiety. To tell the whole truth, I thought that I detected behind this amiable aspect something which warned you that it would not be well to differ from him in a serious matter. Perhaps this idea came to me from the knowledge I had of his quality. I think, however, that it came to me from an attentive examination of his face, features, and person. Where I was especially struck with this character was when I saw him, amid great pomp, in the Throne Room. . . . It was quite the Emperor I saw there, motionless, impassive,

stern, and, as Saint Simon would have said, '*Ne bronchant pour personne.*'

"I should have liked to obtain from the Emperor some words about politics. I could not start such a subject without indiscretion. I made several attempts with all the cleverness of which I was capable, and all the innocence which I could conjure up, but he showed a consummate tact in not hearing a word of what I said. I succeeded, however, in extracting from him two phrases, which I heard not without pleasure, in spite of their generality. We were speaking of war in the abstract.

"‘I have often reflected since my accession,’ said he, ‘and I think that in the situation in which I am placed it is better worth while to do men good than to frighten them.’ And as I narrowed the question a little by speaking of a war between our two countries, and by adding that France was for the most part pacific, he said :

"‘I am speaking to you with entire impartiality. Your Army has worked. It has made great progress. It is ready. If, to speak of the impossible, it found itself on the field of battle with the German Army, no one could foresee the consequences of the struggle. That is why I should consider as a madman and a criminal whoever drove the two peoples to make war.’”

Bismarck declared that the “results of the Conference were equal to zero—a *coup d’épée dans l’eau.*” But this was putting the case a little too extremely. Certainly the Conference had yielded no immediate results of a practical kind; but the Emperor had never expected it to do so. On the other hand, however, it had done no harm, apart perhaps from inspiring the working-classes with hopes which it might be difficult, if not impossible, to fulfil. But it had been the means of eliciting an international expression of opinion as to the principles which ought to underlie all labour legislation, and that was always

something. The seed now sown at Berlin might one day yet spring up and bear good fruit. "*In magnis voluisse sat est,*" was the consolation which the Emperor took to himself when told by his ex-Chancellor that his Labour Conference had been a "*coup d'épée dans l'eau,*" and that, if wishes were horses, beggars would ride.

But there was one thing, more than all others, which was calculated to disappoint the Emperor with the results of his Labour Rescripts, and that was the apparent effect which they had exercised upon the very class whom they were mainly intended to benefit—an effect which must have made his Majesty conclude that, if working-men were the most aggrieved, they were at the same time also the most ungrateful of all his subjects.

"Qui sert son pays, sert souvent un ingrat."

The Labour Rescripts had been issued soon after the rejection of the new anti-Socialist Bill, and on the eve of the General Election for Germany's first quinquennial Parliament. Certainly, therefore, it was hard to resist believing that there was something of an electioneering dodge in the issue of the Labour Rescripts at this particular time, and that they primarily aimed at taking the wind out of the sails of Social Democracy in its passage to the polls.

But the very opposite effect was produced. For, far from taking the wind out of the Socialist sails, the Emperor's Rescripts only seemed to swell them out as if with all the liberated winds from the cave of Æolus. In the previous Reichstag the Social Democrats had only held eleven seats, and to the new one they returned with thirty-five. In spite of—I will not say in consequence of

—the Labour Decrees, the number of Socialist votes had risen, roughly, from 760,000 to 1,420,000, or been nearly doubled. The Social Democrats were now the strongest party in the Empire, and it was only due to the fact of the German people not being represented on the proportional system that they were not also the strongest party in the Parliament of the Empire.

But it is to be feared that the Emperor himself was somewhat to blame for this disastrous, or, at least, disagreeable result. For while, in one hand, he benignantly held aloft his Labour Rescripts, with the other he significantly pressed the electric button which “alarmed” the garrison of Berlin on the very day of the General Election, and thus made 12,000 of his fighting-men pour helter-skelter through the streets of the capital during the very hour when most crowded with the 150,000 adult citizens, hurrying to the urns to record their Social Democratic votes—universal service played off against universal suffrage. “Ballots are yours, but bullets are mine,” saith the “War-Lord.” Was this politic? Was it wise of the Emperor thus to indulge in “alarums and excursions” on such a day of all others in the year?

It excited some astonishment that, in his speech from the throne to the new Reichstag (May, 1890), the Emperor made not the least allusion to his change of Chancellor; but still greater was the surprise that his Majesty made no reference to a new anti-Socialist Bill. The old one had only a few months more to run, and it was, therefore, rightly concluded that the Government had resolved to try the experiment of ruling without a new one. Under the repressive law

of October (1878), Social Democracy had certainly made immense strides forward—had increased its voting ranks from 437,000 to 1,427,000; and the Emperor wished to see what effect the dropping of the repressive measure would have upon the movement. It could not make it worse; it might possibly make it better.

Some of the reforms alluded to in the speech from the throne had been based on the "recommendations" of the Labour Conference, and later on were passed by the Reichstag in a more or less modified shape, so that the Conference was thus proved not to have altogether been the "sword-stroke in water" which Bismarck had pronounced it to be. At the same time also one of the Emperor's dearest wishes was realised, namely, an extension of the benefits of State insurance against old age and incapacity (invalidity)—which had hitherto only applied to certain classes of labourers—to *all* workingmen in the Empire. This law, which came into operation on 1st January, 1891, aimed at securing against destitution in the evening of life more than eleven millions of labourers, and placed Germany at the head of the nations in respect of provision for the impotent aged. If anything was calculated to win over the masses to the side of the Government, it was surely this unique and far-reaching measure; and it was doubtless for this very reason, thought the Government, that it had been opposed by the Social Democrats.

But not only in the Reichstag did the Emperor seek to give effect to his policy of domestic reform. After his opening speech to the Prussian Diet in the same year (November, 1890), it was felt that he had inaugurated

a new era for his own particular Monarchy (which forms, be it ever remembered, about two-thirds of the whole Empire), in the fields of finance, education, and municipal administration. Above all things, he aimed at a more equitable re-adjustment of the burden of taxation—calculated to relieve the poorer classes of his subjects; and at the end of the session (June, 1891) his Majesty was able to convey to the Diet the expression of his “deep satisfaction with the results achieved,” especially for the “just re-distribution of the public burdens in accordance with the individual ability to bear them”—a change for the better which had been carried through by Herr Miquel, the new Minister of Finance.

Yet, in spite of all this, the Emperor himself was by no means satisfied with the results of his efforts to make his subjects happy and contented. For what said his Majesty, when he again donned his robes of seer-like inspiration at the annual banquet of the Brandenburg Diet (February, 1891)?

“I think that I perceive a certain halting, a certain hesitation, and a certain hanging-back. I think I see that gentlemen do not find it easy to recognise the way I tread, and which I have marked out for myself, to lead you and all of us to my goal, to the good of the whole. . . . I know very well that attempts are now being made” (by Prince Bismarck among others) “to instil anxiety into the minds of the people. The spirit of disobedience is stirring in the land, and, clad in the Protean mantle of seductive speech, it seeks to confuse the understanding of the people, and of the men who are devoted to me, using oceans of printer’s ink and paper to conceal the paths which are clear, and must be clear, to every one who knows me and my principles. But I will not let myself thus be led astray.”

When speaking thus, the Emperor mainly had in view the opposition which had been aroused in agrarian circles by the new commercial policy of his Government. But another equally determined opposition was now beginning to spring up on the question of educational reform. This had been one of the first subjects to occupy the serious attention of the Emperor-King after his accession. Dis-mayed by the serried ranks of Social Democracy, he saw that it would be as necessary for him to procure the support of powerful allies for the impending combat, as his grandfather had found it imperative to conclude defensive treaties with Austria and Italy against the possible designs of France and Russia; and these powerful allies were the Church and the School.

The former, William II. lost no opportunity of conciliating by yielding up more and more of the remnants of the May Laws, until at last he was able to declare, when closing the Prussian Diet in June, 1891 :

“I hail with joy the essential step that has been taken towards smoothing away ecclesiastical differences by returning to the Catholic Church the funds that had been sequestrated. Religious peace is indispensable for the welfare of my people; at the same time, the claims put forward in favour of the Churches must be restrained within limits compatible with the position and tasks of the State.”

Repeatedly has the Imperial Government refused to revoke the law expelling the Jesuits and their affiliated Orders from the Fatherland, but in some other respects the Government of Prussia under William II. has practically “gone to Canossa.”

While thus making very high bids for the alliance of the Church of Rome against the revolutionary tendencies of the time, the Emperor-King set even a higher value on the co-operation of the School towards the same end; and on May Day, 1889—the day which had been appointed as an annual “Labour-day” of demonstration by the Socialists throughout Europe—his Majesty addressed a Cabinet Order to his Prussian Ministry on the urgent necessity for educational reform, saying :

“For a long time I have been reflecting on how to utilize the School in its various departments so as to counteract the spread of Socialist and Communist ideas. Before all things, by inculcating the fear of God and love of country, the school will have to pave the way to a sound conception of our social and political condition. But I cannot resist the conclusion that, at a time when Social Democratic errors and perversions of the truth are propagated with increased zeal, the School must make greater efforts to promote a knowledge of what is true, what is real, and what is possible of attainment in the world. It must aim at bringing home to youth the conviction that the doctrines of the Social Democrats are not only opposed to the commandments of God and Christian morality, but are also altogether impracticable, being equally injurious to the individual and the whole community.”

Taking these points of view for their guidance, the Ministry were directed to pursue the matter further, and in about three months' time they had elaborated a set of rules for future application in all Schools, which prescribed that the elements of political economy should be added to the subjects hitherto taught, and that great stress should be laid on the immense, the immortal

merits of the Hohenzollerns, as Sovereigns of the most unselfish and most beneficent kind. "It must be shown," said the Emperor, "by means of statistics, how materially and constantly under this royal protection the wages and welfare of the working classes have been increasing in the present century."

Soon after this, the Emperor-King summoned a special Conference of experts to discuss the question of education in the Gymnasia, or High Schools—a Conference under the presidency of the Minister of Public Worship, which his Majesty himself twice attended (at the opening and close), and delivered two speeches which fairly took the world by storm by reason of their sound masculine sense, insight, and courage. On this occasion William II. showed himself to be a reformer of the highest and truest kind. Nor did he speak without his book; for he himself had been to a public school, and well knew what he was talking about. In my first chapter, about the Emperor's school-days at Cassel, I have already referred to some of the defects of the German system of education, as now dwelt upon by the Emperor at this Conference; but the burden of his lamentation was its utter perversity in the method of its teaching and the character of the subjects taught.

The Gymnasia, or higher public schools, said his Majesty, no longer answered the requirements of the nation and the necessities of the time. But perhaps their chief defect was their preposterous partiality for classical education. The basis of instruction in all such schools ought to be German, and their principal aim should be to turn out young Germans instead of youthful Greeks and Romans. They must courageously break with the

mediæval and monkish habit of mumbling away at much Latin and a little Greek, and take to the German language as the basis of all their scholastic studies. The same remark applied to history as to language. Preference should be given in all schools to German history, geographical and legendary. It was only when they knew all the ins and outs of their own house that they could afford to moon about in a museum.

"We find ourselves at the turning-point of a general forward movement into the new century. My ancestors, with their fingers on the pulse of time, have ever kept a look-out for what might come to pass, and thus remained at the head of the movement which they had resolved to direct. I believe I have mastered the aims of the new spirit of the expiring century. As in the question of social reforms, so in this matter also I have decided not to oppose the new tendencies.

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"The maxim of the Royal House, '*Suum cuique*,' means 'To each what is his,' but not, 'The same to all.' That motto holds good also for the decisions arrived at here. Hitherto, if I may say so, we have gone from Thermopylæ, *viâ* Cannæ, to Rossbach and Vionville. I am leading our youth from Sedan and Gravelotte, *viâ* Leuthen and Rossbach, back to Mantinea and Thermopylæ. I believe that is the right road to take with them."

"*Sic volo, sic jubeo!*" was the autograph inscription on a portrait of himself, which the Emperor-King now presented to the Minister of Public Worship (Herr von Gossler) at the close of the Conference; and there was an end of the matter. *Roma locuta, causa soluta*. But it was very different with some other educational ideas of his Majesty, which required more than a mere Cabinet order for their execution. Where money was wanted for the carrying out of such ideas the sanction of the Prussian

Parliament had first to be obtained, and when next it met (winter of 1890), it was presented with a very elaborate Bill on Public Elementary Schools, which aimed at re-adjusting the burden of maintaining them, making instruction free, and bettering the position of the teachers. But this measure found little favour with the Clericals, with whose assistance alone it could be passed, as not containing concessions enough to their demands; and Herr von Gossler hastened to resign, in order to make way for a Minister who would take more account of Catholic claims.*

This was Count Zedlitz-Trützschler, who at once declared that the Government had dropped Herr von Gossler's School Bill, and that it would come forward with an amended measure of the same kind. This was in the spring of 1891; but it was not till January of the following year that it kept its word. In the meanwhile the Pope had lost the political services of Dr. Windthorst, his Chief of the Staff in Germany. But though the Clericals had thus been deprived of their stoutest champion, they had remained as inexorable as before in their demands; and what then was the astonishment of the nation to find that the New Education Bill, which was very much more denominational in character than its unlucky predecessor, virtually proposed to hand over the School to the Church, and restore the dominion of the clergy over the minds of the young.

In his anxiety to secure the Church as an ally in opposing the growing evils of Social Democracy, the

* See also p. 230.

Emperor-King was apparently willing to subordinate his own civil authority to that of the Pope. In his speech at the Educational Conference, his Majesty had said he believed that he had "mastered the aims and impulses of the new spirit which thrills the expiring century"; but this new School Bill was a convincing proof that he completely misunderstood the character and convictions of his own subjects. For presently there arose such a violent storm of protest and indignation throughout the land as swept the School Bill, like a fluttering autumn leaf, into the limbo of impossible measures. From all the chief cities and centres of enlightenment in Prussia protests against the obnoxious Bill came pouring into Berlin. A factitious kind of majority had been secured for the measure in Parliament; but the best intelligence of the nation was decidedly against it, and the Emperor felt that it would be unwise to brave public opinion on the subject.

Count Caprivi had avowed that, even if the measure encountered a strong adverse current of public opinion, it would again show, if need be, that it "could swim against the stream." But against such a stream, such a torrent of invective as was now tossing about the School Bill on its angry bosom, swimming was out of the question. Sinking was the only thing that could be thought of, and accordingly the School Bill ship was at last scuttled—its Captain, Count Zedlitz, going down with it, and the Admiral on board, Count Caprivi, being only hauled ashore by the humane exertions of the Emperor. The National Liberal purser of the vessel, too, Dr. Miquel (Finance Minister), who had identified himself so prominently with the hateful measure, sent

in his papers, though these were returned to him by the ship's owner. The latter contented himself with accepting, as a peace-offering to the nation for the mistaken policy which he himself had inspired, the resignation of Count Zedlitz as Minister of Public Worship (succeeded by Dr. Bossé), and of Count Caprivi as Minister-President of the Prussian Cabinet, who was replaced by Count Eulenburg, the Governor of Hesse-Nassau (March, 1892).

Thus in exactly two years since Bismarck's dismissal from office, the Emperor himself had conjured up another "Chancellor crisis." But he could not yet afford to part with Caprivi as he had parted with Bismarck. For one thing, that would have looked too much like sacrificing his new Chancellor to the rancour of his old one; and this was a satisfaction which the offended Monarch could by no means yet give to his equally-offended man. Besides, the Emperor was still on the best of terms with his new Chancellor, for whose personal character and political methods he had the highest respect.

It was during the acrimonious debates on the School Bill that the Emperor delivered himself of another of his Brandenburg speeches, which acted like oil on the flames of public controversy :

It had been customary of late to grumble and find fault with everything the Government did. On the most trifling grounds the quiet of the people was disturbed, and their pleasure in the prosperity of the great German Fatherland embittered. From this grumbling and discontent, many were led to believe that Germany was one of the unhappiest and worst governed countries in the world. Would it not be better for such persons to shake

the dust of Germany from their feet, and leave as soon as possible this miserable and pitiable position. . . . The present stage of German history might be likened to an episode in the life of the great English Admiral, Sir Francis Drake. He had landed in South America, in his search for the great ocean, of whose existence he was convinced, but in which many of his companions refused to believe. A native chief had remarked the ceaseless search of the stranger, the greatness of whose character he recognised. He led him with immense difficulty to the summit of a mountain whence he saw extended before him the ocean which he had crossed with so much labour and difficulty. The chief then led him to a neighbouring rock, whence he saw spread at his feet the Pacific Ocean, sparkling in the sun.

"So it is with us. The firm conviction of your sympathy in my labours gives me renewed strength to persist in my work, and to press forward on the path which Heaven has marked out for me. I am helped thereto by my feeling of responsibility to the Ruler of all, and the firm conviction that He, our old ally of Rossbach and Dennewitz, will not now leave me in the lurch. He has given Himself such endless trouble with our Old Mark, and with our House, that we can assume He has not done this for nothing. No, Brandenburgers, on the contrary, we are called to greatness, and to glorious days will I lead you. Do not let grumblings and the party-speeches of discontented persons darken your future, or lessen your pleasure in your co-operation with me. With winged words alone nothing can be done, and to the endless complaints about the 'new course,' and the men who direct it, I answer confidently and decidedly: 'My course is the right one, and I shall continue to steer it.'"

"A hit, a very palpable hit!" sang out a chorus of voices when one critic of this oration recalled the words of Frederick the Great, who had laid down that a country must be ruled in such a way as to attract people, not

repel them; while another commentator made a calculation to show that if all the "nagglers" (*Norgler*) and the discontented ones were to shake the dust off their shoes and quit the Fatherland, there would be very few left to defend it against the French. Besides, had the Government not been doing all it could in recent years to stem the flowing tide of emigration? What the Emperor above all things wanted was soldiers, as he had said in his education speech, and where was he to get these if his malcontent subjects acted on his advice and sought a happier land?

This advice, too, sounded all the stranger, as his Majesty was for ever coming to the Reichstag with a demand for more fighting men. We have already seen how, shortly before becoming Crown Prince (in February, 1888), he had hurried to his grandfather with the joyful news of the immense addition to the Army which the Reichstag had voted in consequence of Bismarck's great speech. But two years had not elapsed before it had again become necessary to keep pace with the armaments of France by adding 18,500 men to the Imperial host (June, 1890); and when Parliament met in the autumn of 1892, it was told that the political and military situation in Europe had once more become such as to enjoin on Germany the imperative duty of raising her peace establishment to about the figure of half a million men. When Bismarck himself ventured to condemn this fresh request as being "quite unnecessary," it may well be imagined that the regular Opposition in Parliament was anything but conciliatory, in spite of the prospect of the period of service with the colours (for

the infantry) being reduced from three to two years, by way of compensation for the fresh sacrifices in men and money now demanded of the nation.

But the Reichstag rejected the Bill, and it was at once dissolved, Cæsar being firmly minded to appeal from the verdict of Demosthenes to the judgment of Demos. And what was that judgment? It was expressed in the fact that, in round numbers, 4,350,000 votes had been cast against the Army Bill, and 3,330,000 for it; while the Socialists, who registered far more votes than any other party, returned to the new Reichstag (on the anniversary of Königgratz, 1893) with forty-four seats instead of thirty-five! But, in spite of this virtual rejection of the Army Bill by the nation, it was within a few days (though in an amended and more palatable form) passed by the Reichstag, and for the simple reason that the relative strength of parties in Parliament did not correspond with their numerical size in the country itself. It was to the accident of this absurd anomaly, this lack of proportion between popular conviction and Parliamentary representation, that the Emperor owed his poor majority of sixteen in favour of the new Military Septennate, which once more made him the happiest man in Germany—until, at least, he had time to reflect on the full significance of the late elections.

It was within less than a fortnight after the opening of the winter session of the new Parliament (November, 1893)—when the Government made a demand for fresh taxes, which were destined to be refused—that an attempt was made to take the life of the Emperor, as well as of his Chancellor, Caprivi, to

whom he had ascribed the chief merit in the passing of the last Army Bill, and conveyed the expression of his "undying thanks." But the blows were aimed from a long way off—from Orleans on the Loire—and happily they missed their aim. From this French city (which had erstwhile been in the grip of the invading Germans) two small packets reached Berlin by post—one addressed to the Emperor, and the other to his Chancellor; and on these being opened, in both cases by others than their immediate addressees, they were found to contain a mixture of gunpowder and nitro-glycerine with a devilish contrivance for exploding it.

A letter, in French, addressed to Caprivi (whose love of plants and gardening must, therefore, surely have been well known to the sender) said that this was a specimen of some radish seeds, "*d'une espèce étonnante, que l'on sème au mois de Décembre pour en avoir le produit au mois de Février. Cette espèce ne craint pas la gèle*"; while a similar billet was addressed to the Emperor.

But here certainty was at an end. The French Government, on its part, did all it could to probe the mystery of these infernal machines, but whether sent by a French or German hand from Orleans could never be made out; nor whether the head directing this hand had been inspired by a French spirit of revengefulness, or an international spirit of anarchy, or even a German spirit of revolution. "The act," said the *Vorwärts*, the chief mouthpiece of the Social Democrats, "is evidently that of a dangerous madman who, it is to be hoped, will soon be lodged in a lunatic asylum." In any case, prayers were offered up in all Prussian churches for the happy escape of the

Emperor-King, who had thus undergone what seemed to be his baptism of anarchic fire; while the Reichstag also gave expression at once to its indignation and its joy.

The incident had the effect of redirecting the Emperor's attention in the most serious manner to the slumbering, or rather active, forces of revolution as one of the most urgent questions of the time—the more so as France, Spain, and other countries had already begun to take special measures against the apostles of militant anarchy. For about this time also had not a bomb been thrown into the midst of the French Chamber—not to speak of other similar outrages in Paris? But presently the Emperor's mind became a prey to a still greater anxiety, almost, than that which had been inspired by the alarming spread of Socialism. For, towards the end of the year 1893, all other German questions were thrown into the shade by that of the new commercial treaty with Russia, compared with which the question of how money was to be raised for the increased Army estimates, and how the finances of the Empire generally were to be reformed, receded for the time being into the background.

In the autumn of this year Germany and Russia had been waging a bitter customs-war, and there was no saying that this might not lead to a positive cannon-war. Perhaps this dire result was only averted by the conciliatory spirit of the "Tsar-Peacekeeper," who agreed to resume negotiations for a new tariff on a better basis than that on which these negotiations had been so abruptly broken off. Special commissioners were sent to

Berlin, animated with a spirit of compromise; and in the spring of 1894 (February 5th), there was signed a new tariff treaty between the two countries, which was known to enjoy the warm support of the Emperor, no less from the political than the commercial point of view.

But what had contented his Majesty gave mortal offence to a very large proportion of those who had hitherto been his Majesty's most devoted subjects. The commercial treaty with Austria, concluded three years previously, had been a bitter disappointment to the Agrarians, and now this new tariff agreement with Russia was felt by them to be a most disastrous blow to their vital interests. For, to their thinking, it had sacrificed the agriculture to the industry of the nation; and agriculture had hitherto been the main support—if latterly of a very meagre kind—of more than two-thirds of this nation, of that class which had always been most loyal to the throne of Prussia, and formed—not merely the backbone—but the positive body of the Army. “The satisfaction of our demands,” exclaimed the President of the General Meeting of the Agrarian League (numbering about 180,000 members) “is synonymous with the preservation of throne and altar. It was the peasant farmers who decided last year's passing of the new Army Bill, and the peasant sons of Germany have always won her victories, while a whole battalion of stock-jobbers could not even storm a castle of cards.”

When speaking at Königsberg, three years previously, the Emperor-King had said: “I know very well where, in your case, the shoe pinches, and what remains to be done for you, and I have formed my plans accordingly

. . . especially for your agricultural population." And now this was how his Majesty had kept his word—by agreeing to a considerable reduction of the grain duties, and securing to Russia the most-favoured-nation treatment in the agricultural field, in return for some concessions in the industrial domain! It was simply maddening, cried the Agrarians—most of them already verging towards bankruptcy and ruin; for in no country in all Europe was the landed interest at such a disastrously low ebb as now in Prussia—and one of their number, Herr von Thüngen, scrupled not even to declare that, in concluding the Russian treaty, Count Caprivi had no longer been guided by the welfare of the Fatherland, but by the "superior will" of its *Landeswater*. On the other hand, the Emperor telegraphed, "Spoken like a true nobleman!" to one aristocratic renegade to his party (Count Dönhoff) who, in an electoral address, had seen fit to counsel the Conservative Agrarians to refrain from voting against the Russian treaty, although bemoaned by them as a "domestic Jena."

But it was voted all the same, and now Count Caprivi became far more unpopular with the Conservatives than, perhaps, his predecessor had ever been with any party whatsoever. That commercial treaty with Russia was to prove the second Chancellor's official coffin. But it was also to some extent a blow to the popularity of the Emperor-King himself, with the men who had hitherto been the main pillars of the Prussian throne—the petty *noblesse* and peasant-farmers of Prussia; and the Conservative Press now began to indulge in language

which had hitherto been the monopoly of the Social Democrats.

But to all such "nagglers" the Emperor merely replied, at the next Brandenburg banquet, by dilating on the immense services which the Hohenzollerns had ever rendered their subjects, and by again asserting, for the hundredth time, that they had only to answer to God and their own conscience for the performance of their duty. Moreover, just before speaking thus, the Emperor had gone to Friedrichsruh to return the visit paid him a month previously by his reconciled Chancellor, and to show the malcontent Agrarians that he had at last succeeded in silencing the voice of at least one dreaded critic, who had said of the Russian treaty that, as Chancellor, he would have voted for it, but, as deputy and farmer, against it.

But this silencing of the man who had hitherto been one of their boldest spokesmen only made these Agrarians all the more furious; and now that the Russian treaty had been signed and sanctioned, they began to cast about for means of neutralising its baneful effects. Prominent among their proposed remedies were bi-metallism and State granaries. But when they demanded the introduction of a silver currency in addition to that of gold, they were told, again and again, that nothing could be done in this respect without the initiative of England, who would not move; and when they asked that the State should become the sole buyer and retailer of all imported grain at a certain fixed scale favourable to native farmers, they were indignantly informed that the Kaiser looked upon it as beneath his dignity to

become a "bread usurer" on behalf of them or any other body. No; "the interests of individuals must be subordinated to the common weal," and as for any one who dared to oppose his Majesty's policy—would he not be "dashed to pieces"?

This was again the terrible fate which was adumbrated to the landowners of East Prussia when his Majesty went to Königsberg to manœuvre his "big battalions" in the autumn of 1894, and that was precisely the province where the Agrarian agitation against the Russian treaty had assumed its fiercest form. I have already had occasion to quote the Emperor-King's cutting lecture on the unpardonable sin of opposition to the Royal will, which he administered to the noble landowners at a banquet to which they had been invited by their divine-right lord. In pursuance of the same theme his Majesty said :—

"Gentlemen, that which bears heavily upon you oppresses me as well, for I am the largest landowner in our State, and am fully alive to the fact that we are passing through hard times. My daily pre-occupation is how best to help you; but you must support me in this endeavour, not by clamour, not by the means employed by the professional Opposition parties so often justly combated by you, but by approaching your Sovereign in a spirit of confidence. My door is at all times open to each one of my subjects, and I lend him a ready ear. Act up to that in the future, and I shall regard all that has passed as over and done with. . . .

"Gentlemen, let us regard the burdens that oppress us, and the crisis through which we are passing, in the light of the Christian doctrine in which we have been educated, and in which we have grown up—as a trial imposed on us by God. Let us keep a tranquil mind, and endure with

Christian patience, with unshaken fortitude, and in the hope of better times, according to our old motto, '*Noblesse oblige*.' We witnessed an inspiring ceremony the day before yesterday. Before us stands the statue of the Emperor William, the Imperial sword uplifted in his right hand, the symbol of law and order. It exhorts us all to other duties, to the serious combating of designs directed against the very basis of our political and social fabric. To you, gentlemen, I address my summons to the fight for religion, morality, and order, against the parties of Revolution."

Speaking a few days later, at Polish Thorn—that Metz of Eastern Germany—the Emperor said:—

"I hope that the Polish citizens of Thorn will conduct themselves in accordance with what I said at Königsberg. Only if we stand shoulder to shoulder, like a phalanx, is it possible for us to carry on the struggle with the Revolution to a victorious end."

From these extracts it will be seen that the dominant idea in the mind of the Emperor had now again become his fear of the Revolution. The interests of agriculture were all very well in their way, "but, *meine Herren*, how about the aims of anarchy?" The Agrarians had taken to the war-path, and the Emperor had thus trailed a red-herring across their scent—or rather, perhaps, a red-rag redolent of petroleum. "If you really want to fight," said his Majesty in effect, "why not come and fight with me against the common foe, who has not even been conciliated to any appreciable extent by the commercial treaty with Russia." So much had this treaty been regarded by the Agrarians as an indirect bid for the favour of the malcontent proletariat, that they accused Caprivi of "swimming with the stream of Social

Democracy"; while Caprivi, on the other hand, speaking at Dantzig, declared that, in consenting to the treaty,

"the Emperor not only considered it as a commercial advantage to Germany, and as a means of bringing us closer to Russia, and guaranteeing peace anew; but he had also looked far beyond this, and contemplated the possibility of the coming century calling for a coalition of the European nations to deal with certain eventualities"—

another Holy Alliance, in fact, against the growing forces of international revolution and anarchy.

Meanwhile, how to cope with these forces for the present was the problem with which the Emperor now set himself to wrestle, and it became known that he had set his heart on what was called an Anti-Revolution Bill. The results of his dropping the Anti-Socialist Law had not come up to his expectations, and repression must again be had recourse to if the State was not to go to ruin. The question was a grave one, and the members of the Federal Council were summoned to a special conference on the subject, at Berlin, towards the end of October (1894). On the 25th of this month it became known that these delegates of all the German Sovereigns, as well as the Emperor himself, had adopted the views of Count Caprivi, which were more moderate than those of his colleague, Count Eulenburg, Prussian Premier and Minister of the Interior—the intellectual author of the Anti-Socialist Law of October, 1878; and next day all Europe was astonished to hear that the Emperor, with a light heart, had accepted the resignation of his Chancellor and his Premier as well.

What was the meaning of all this? The incident has not yet been wholly freed from obscurity, for the high-minded Count Caprivi was much too proud, and perhaps, also, too contemptuous of those at whose hands he had suffered, to pour out his heart to the Press about the causes of his fall in the manner of the querulous exile of Friedrichsruh. Never did man conceal his sorrows with a nobler and more disdainful silence. But one thing certain is that he fell a victim to the intrigues of the Conservative Agrarians, who had vowed to pay him out for the Russian treaty, and who enjoyed something more, perhaps, than the secret sympathy of the Chancellor's colleague, Count Eulenburg; so much so, that when a deputation of noble landowners from East Prussia came to Berlin to utter their *pater peccavi* to the Emperor-King in consequence of his Königsberg rebuke, and humbly offer him their energetic help in combating "the Revolution," they were admitted to an audience of his Majesty without the knowledge of his Chancellor. The Lord Chamberlain, another member of the Eulenburg tribe, had managed this audience; while a third Eulenburg, the Ambassador at Vienna, gave a shooting-party about this time to the Emperor, on whom this powerful sept of Prussian noblemen thus seems to have exercised a very strong and subtle influence in connection with the whole incident. Curiously enough, too, on the very day the Eulenburgs had gained for their Agrarians an audience of the Emperor, Count Caprivi was waited upon by a deputation from Dantzig to present him with the freedom of that city in recognition of the great benefits which had been

conferred upon it by the new commercial treaty with Russia.

Thus the threads of accident and intrigue became very much intermixed, and a final twist was given to the tangle by the appearance of an article in the *Cologne Gazette*—very reproachful to Count Eulenburg, who would seem to have complained about it to the Emperor as bearing evident signs of inspiration by Caprivi. His Majesty begged the Chancellor to disavow the obnoxious article, which the latter—like the high-mettled gentleman that he was—declined to do, as having had nothing whatever to do with it; and thus the situation became ever more complicated, till at last it could only receive its solution by the resignation of both the divergent Ministers.

For the separation of the offices of German Chancellor and Prussian Premier had once more been tried and found impracticable, or, at any rate, highly inconvenient. The Emperor wished to see these offices again united in one person. But, as Caprivi would not any longer remain Chancellor, and as Eulenburg could not succeed to a post which would entail upon him the necessity of championing the Anti-Revolution Bill that did not embody his own extreme reactionary views, there was nothing left for the Emperor but to accept the resignation of both Chancellor and Premier.

That the former had been very badly and ungenerously treated in the matter was a popular belief, which was not upset by the Emperor bestowing the Black Eagle in brilliants as a parting gift, a kind of sore-plaster, on the noble-minded, straightforward, and chivalrous Count

Caprivi, who, in the face of incomparable difficulties, had done so much during his four and a-half years of faithful and self-denying service. Of this the chief results had been the African agreement with England, which restored Heligoland to Germany, and thus made Caprivi, like Bismarck, an actual "*Mehrer des Reichs*"; the new Military Septennate, with its increased ranks and shorter term of service; and, above all, the new commercial treaties.

This service-record, as well as his high character, had gained him the personal esteem of all parties, and the political hatred of none but the Agrarians. The subtle intrigues of a set of unscrupulous politicians Count Caprivi had scorned to meet with anything but the simple arts of an honest soldier, and he had succumbed in the unequal contest. But as it was the Emperor who had summoned this guileless and devoted soldier from the head of his Army Corps to the helm of the ship of State, and had already expressed his "undying gratitude" for the way in which his new pilot had steered the vessel, it was surely also incumbent on his Majesty to give practical effect to this feeling by imitating the personal loyalty which had been so touchingly shown him by his second Chancellor.

To expose himself to the danger of such ungenerous treatment as had fallen to the lot of Count Caprivi was a prospect which could not but weigh heavily with any man who might now be invited to step into his place; but Prince Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, the Statthalter of Alsace-Lorraine, was courageous enough to accept the office with all its risks and all its responsibilities.

Hitherto, the Prince had scarcely ever committed a single mistake or serious error of judgment in the whole course of his long and varied career. He was beloved and respected by his own Bavarian countrymen, and admired in the Imperial Diet. Without surrendering his independence to Bismarck, he had ever commanded his confidence and esteem. He had made himself popular with the French of Paris, and, what was still more difficult, with the French in Alsace-Lorraine, which he ruled with such a successful mixture of the *suaviter in modo* with the *fortiter in re*. It only now remained for him to show that, with all his wisdom and moderation, he was equal to the supreme task of acting as steersman to the wilful master-mariner who had already dropped two of his pilots.

But one of his very first official acts, as Imperial pilot, was to steer a false course at the bidding of his impulsive captain, and this was when he demanded the sanction of the Reichstag for the criminal prosecution of the Socialist deputies who had refused to rise from their seats with the rest of the House, and cheer the Emperor at the call of the President, as being "irreconcilable with our honour and dignity."

This was a fine beginning for the deliberations of the Reichstag in the magnificent new House of Parliament which had been ceremoniously opened the day before by the Emperor; though there were not wanting certain indications that this inaugural ceremony would have assumed a much more cordial and impressive form, had it been directly concerned with the glorification of the Hohenzollern dynasty, instead of with the gratification

of the German people. Curiously enough, this outward expression of German unity received its consummation at a time when the nation had never been more a prey to internal dissension.

All parties had been looking forward with eager interest to the opening speech from the throne, but this speech was of an exceedingly vague kind. Full of a high-sounding humanitarianism, the Emperor's address was reducible to two main heads—reform and repression—protection for the weak, and punishment for the wicked. The finances of the Empire would have to be reformed, *i.e.*, fresh taxes raised; unfair means in trade competition required to be counteracted; unjustly condemned persons must be compensated; the struggle for existence among the working-classes had to be rendered easier, but (and this was a very serious “but”), if “the success of these efforts is to be assured, it appears necessary to oppose more effectually than hitherto the pernicious conduct of those who attempt to disturb the executive power in the fulfilment of its duty.”

This was the Imperial statement that filled the patience-cup of the Socialists to overflowing, and steeled them to that act of personal discourtesy which had made the very first sitting of the Reichstag, in its new hall of assembly, one of the most scandalous on record. But if the Socialists—representing by far the largest party in the Empire—had thus been guilty of personal discourtesy to its head, it could not, on the other hand, be said of the Emperor himself that he acted with discretion in demanding their criminal prosecution, seeing that the Reichstag, by a very large majority, would not hear of

such an encroachment on its rights; and thus his Majesty had to put up with what was tantamount to a grave personal rebuff from the representatives of the people.

But a still graver rebuff of a political kind was in store for him. For, after long and bitter debates on the subject, the Reichstag rejected (May, 1895), by a sweeping majority, the Anti-Revolution Bill, which had been condemned throughout the entire nation as a danger to civil liberty and a perfect disgrace to the civilisation of the age. For a second time it was brought home to the Emperor, in the most signal manner, what a gross mistake he had made in saying that he had "mastered the aims and impulses of the new spirit which thrills the aspiring century." For a second time it looked as if the German Emperor had clearly shown that he did not understand the character and temper of the German people.

Otherwise, how could he possibly have given his approval to a measure which stirred up even a fiercer storm of public denunciation than that which had swept away his Elementary School Bill—a storm which bore upon its wings to Berlin, from all parts of the Fatherland, no fewer than 20,000 petitions against a measure which was justly described as a mortal blow to the independence of the German mind. The Universities, the Press, the *littérateurs*, all the enlightened classes of Germany, rose to protest against penal enactments which threatened to imperil freedom of thought and scientific investigation—enactments which received their most dangerous, because most elastic, expression in the clauses of the Bill dealing

with the "glorification" of crime and the protection of the Army and Navy from Socialist machinations.

It was to no purpose that, during the period when the Bill was in Committee, or before the House (November, 1894, to May, 1895), the Emperor did his best to recover the allegiance of the Agrarians by receiving more deputations and speaking them fair, as well as by convoking a special meeting of the State Council, a Standing Committee of Experts, which he presided over himself, to suggest "ways and means calculated to increase the profit derived from the cultivation of the soil, and thus avert the dangers to which those engaged in agriculture are at present exposed." His Majesty had also humoured the Agrarians by dropping his second pilot, the Chancellor who boasted that he had not a single acre to his name, and replacing him by a landed magnate whose interests might be supposed to be identical with theirs.

Moreover, an outspoken opponent of Caprivi's economic policy, Baron von Hammerstein-Loxten, had succeeded Herr von Heyden at the Ministry of Agriculture; while the Secretary of the Imperial Treasury, Baron von Maltzahn, had also given way to Count Posadowsky, a more hope-inspiring financier. All these things the Emperor did for the Agrarians, and yet their war-cry continued to be: *Ohne Kanitz, keine Kähne!* or, "Not a new war-ship shall we vote you, unless you adopt the programme of our leader, Count Kanitz, with its State monopoly of imported grain, its double currency, and its cereal Zoll-Verein of the European Powers mainly interested in agriculture."

But in spite of all the heartening offered by the Emperor-King to the Agrarians, tempered with warnings against the "realisation of Utopias," the Conservatives had not supported the Anti-Revolution Bill with all the thorough-going "energy" which the Emperor had expected of them; and when at last this odious instrument of tyranny had been consigned to the chamber of legislative horrors, the Emperor could not declare, as he had done in the case of the Bismarck birthday motion, that the vote of the Reichstag was in "complete opposition" to the feelings of the nation.

The new Minister of Justice, Dr. Schönstedt, and the new Minister of the Interior, Herr von Köller (who came from Strassburg with Prince Hohenlohe), had done their best, by their maladroitness and aggressive manner, to wreck the Bill; while the Minister of War, Bronsart von Schellendorff, had completed the blunders of his colleagues by preaching a doctrine of "blood and iron" similar to that which the Emperor himself had inculcated, when reminding his recruits that their oath might possibly impose upon them the necessity of shooting down their own nearest and dearest relatives in the streets.

As for Prince Hohenlohe, the debates on the Bill revealed the fact that he was anything but a "blood and iron" Chancellor, either in look, word, or deed. For he wore no military uniform, with a sword at his side, like his two predecessors, and revealed nothing of that combative and commanding character which enabled Bismarck to cope, not always successfully, but ever supremely well, with the "fierce democracy" of the German Parliament. True, the anti-Revolution Bill had

been the work of his immediate predecessor, but though the new Chancellor had taken it over as part of his official inheritance, his championship of his adopted child was ever of the feeblest and most half-hearted kind. Indeed, it soon began to appear as if the Emperor had made as great a mistake, almost, in appointing Prince Hohenlohe to the Chancellorship as he had committed in parting with Count Caprivi.

The only blunder which his Majesty did *not* commit in connection with the measure was to yield to his natural enough impulse and appeal to the nation. But he wisely refrained from doing this, even though, on the day after the rejection of the Anti-Revolution Act, the Reichstag crowned its negative work by throwing out the Tobacco Tax Bill, thus "digging a common grave for all Government measures," as was bitterly said by the Financial Secretary. To dissolve Parliament in such circumstances would only have been adding to the Socialist mill more of the grist with which the Emperor had already supplied it in abundance by his futile attempt to prosecute the deputies for *lèse-majesté*; and so, accepting his defeats with a wise silence, he went away to the country to shoot.

But, indeed, there was one subject which was now beginning to occupy the Emperor's mind to the exclusion of all else; and the defeats and disappointments which he had suffered at the hands of the people were more than counteracted by the pleasure he felt at the prospect of the opening of the Elbe-Kiel Canal—a ceremony to which he had invited all the naval nations of the world. If the Reichstag had rejected his Tobacco Tax Bill, it

had at least voted £85,000 to defray the costs of this great international ceremony, which was to inaugurate a work of peace as well as of war—for the strategic value of the Canal as an ironclad waterway from sea to sea was, perhaps, uppermost in the minds of its promoters—and which would make the German Emperor the most conspicuous figure in Europe for nearly a whole festive week (June, 1895).

This was an event to which the Emperor had been looking forward with the utmost pleasure, as to one which could not fail to open up a new source of commercial prosperity, as well as of military security, to the nation under his care, and thus aid him in the Heaven-appointed task of making that nation more happy and contented. What he had already done to achieve this end, and with what measure of success, it has been the object of this chapter, in general outline, to show. But I cannot close it without briefly alluding to some of the minor incidents which marked the course of his Majesty's Seven Years' War with the disruptive forces of popular discontent.

We have already seen that, in his anxiety to reduce the number of those opposing forces, and even secure them as allies in his principal task of combating the spirit of revolution stirring in the land, the Emperor-King had done all he could to conciliate the Catholics, by yielding back bit by bit of the ground from which they were driven during the *Kulturkampf*—all but certain spots which the State still deemed indispensable as strategic points of security. But in addition to this, the Emperor had paid a second visit to the Pope

(April, 1893), in company with the Empress this time, and remained closeted with his Holiness for a whole hour, leaving a much better impression in the Vatican than he had done in 1888.*

In the preceding year (31st October, 1892), the three hundred and seventy-fifth anniversary of the day on which Luther had nailed his colours to the mast—nailed his theses to the door of Wittenberg Church, the Emperor opened this *Schlosskirche* there in its restored form before a brilliant assemblage of the Protestant Princes of Germany and Europe (including the Duke of York, for Queen Victoria); and on this occasion he delivered himself of one of his finest and most perfervid speeches in praise of freedom of conscience—a mere amplification, to some extent, of the Great Frederick's "*Jedermann soll nach seiner Façon selig werden*"—"Everyone may get to heaven in his own way." But at the same time his Majesty, to the disappointment of many of his over-zealous Protestant subjects, had avoided everything that could give the least offence to the Catholics, or even be construed as an answer to the re-asseveration of their loud demands for the return of the Jesuits, and other concessions.

In the opinion of many, the usurious Jews were a far greater curse to Germany than the intriguing Jesuits had ever been; and the Anti-Semites, with Stocker at their head, were not without a secret hope that the new Kaiser, like the new King of Egypt who knew not Joseph, would deal wisely, in their particular sense of the term, with the children of Israel. Apprehensive that some such fate

* *Vide* p. 101.

might be in store for her co religionists, and that the Kaiser might seek to imitate the Jew-persecuting policy of his dear friend, the "Tsar-Peacekeeper," the Baroness Charles de Rothschild wrote to the Emperor (March, 1890): "I beseech your Majesty to take into your gracious consideration the condition of your Jewish subjects, and not to allow foreign prejudice, or ill will, to have any influence in this matter." To which the prompt reply was :

"His Majesty is unable to perceive what circumstances in particular at the present time can give cause for the expression of such keen anxiety regarding the treatment of his Jewish subjects. His Majesty regards all his subjects, without reference to class or religious profession, with the same paternal benevolence. His Jewish subjects may rely all the more upon his Majesty's protection, inasmuch as, in accordance with the assurance given by the writer of the letter, their endeavour will be to yield to no other class of the population in the exercise of true patriotism and civic virtue."

The sincerity of such "paternal benevolence" could scarcely be doubted when, a little later in the same year, the Emperor virtually dismissed Herr Stöcker, the champion Jew-baiter, from his post as Court-chaplain, in spite of the fact, as we saw, that his Majesty, when Prince William, had so closely identified himself with the "Christian-Socialist" aims of this rabid reformer. But how was a poor, inconvenient creature like Stocker to expect a tender consideration which had been denied to Bismarck, and was equally to be withheld from Caprivi? Yet it is to be feared that, in shaking off the inconvenient Court-preacher, the Emperor only added to his difficulties

instead of lessening them. For the "martyr" Stocker now became a Peter-the-Hermit kind of apostle, and the founder of quite a new political party—that of the Anti-Semites, who returned no fewer than sixteen members (with a poll of 263,000 votes) at the election of 1893.

Stocker had declared that "nothing had done more to increase the prevailing discontent than the indifference of the Government to the grinding predominance of the Jews"; and this recrudescence of the Anti-Semitic fury had only been fostered by the "Ahlwardt scandals" in the Reichstag. Among other reproaches, this deputy had accused the Government of giving a large contract for rifles to a Jewish firm in Berlin, which had done its work so badly as to amount to a positive betrayal of the Army. The charge turned out to be untrue, and the Emperor was content to let the repeaters of his fighting men continue to be made by Hebrew firms, though he was averse from seeing these men commanded by officers of Jewish faith. His "paternal benevolence" to the Semitic portion of his subjects went far, but here he drew the line—as we saw when considering his Majesty's edict touching the opening up of fresh recruiting-fields for his officers.* Not a single Jew holds the Kaiser's commission in the peace establishment of the Army with the colours—and this, not because it is against the law, but because it is against the liking of the race-proud Junkers and their sympathetic War-Lord.

That the Jews, on the whole, had been won over to the Emperor's side by the promise of his "paternal benevolence" was not to be doubted. But, *per contra*, the

* *Vide* p. 128.

Conservative Anti-Semites, an ever-increasing party, could scarcely be said to have been thorough-going supporters of the Emperor's policy, so that his Majesty had at last to consider whether it had been altogether wise of him to conciliate his Jews, at the cost of such an immense defection of his Gentiles. There was one other party, however, for whose assistance in his war with "the Revolution" the Emperor made a more successful bid—the party of the Guelphs; and the allegiance of these his Majesty purchased, not with promises, but with solid cash down in the shape of the sequestered moneys of the deposed King of Hanover. The interest on these moneys had, since 1868, been used by the Prussian Government as a Secret Service Fund, commonly called the "Reptile Fund"; but as it was now determined to discard its application in this way, the question arose what was to be done with it.

William II. had always been most warmly, nay, even enthusiastically welcomed by the Hanoverians whenever he went among them to manœuvre troops; and in one of those moments of magnanimous impulse which so frequently come upon him, his Majesty resolved to let the Duke of Cumberland at last come by his pecuniary inheritance, provided he undertook not to imperil in any way the peace of the Empire or any of its component parts—Hanover and Brunswick, for example. This the Duke did in a letter to the Emperor, without, however, formally relinquishing his claim either to the crown of Hanover or that of Brunswick; and at last, in a fashion, "the King enjoyed his own again." That the Duke's son, if not himself, will also one day be permitted to do so in

respect of the crown of Brunswick is not improbable ; but as for Herrenhausen, the home of the White Horse—shall this not remain Prussian till the crack of doom ?

The Emperor's marriage had reconciled the Schleswig-Holsteiners to their fate ; the Hessians of Nassau had also buried the hatchet ; the Guelphs of Hanover had now in turn been gratified ; and thus William II. had made another marked advance on the path of that consistent policy which aimed at disposing of all his minor domestic troubles, so that he might have his hands free to deal with what he deemed to be the greatest danger of the time.

In the combating of this danger—the spirit of revolution—the Emperor had always laid great stress on the raising of the moral and religious condition of the people. By an Anti-Drink Bill, an Education Bill, and other cognate measures, the Government had sought, not always with success, to promote his Majesty's views in this respect ; and he himself on more than one occasion took to lecturing where it was impossible to legislate. This was the case, for example, in his notable "Heinze Rescript," in which he gave vent to the most doleful lamentations on the evils of prostitution in his capital, and suggested, among other things, a curtailment of the freedom of speech of counsel employed to defend notorious *Zuhalter*, or *souteneurs*, a class of ruffians who were fast becoming a positive danger to society and the State. Another trial at Hanover was seized upon by the Emperor as a text for a similar homily on the curse of betting and gambling, which was ruining so many of his officers.

But it was considered strange that while his Majesty sternly set his face against all indulgence in such pernicious habits at the card-table or on the race-course, he should have continued to encourage his subjects in their attachment to that particular form of gambling known as State-lotteries. One of these had been devised as a means of raising the wind for the buying up of a ramshackle row of old houses opposite the Schloss, to make room for a monument to the old Emperor, while recourse was also had to a similar scheme for netting two and a-half million marks towards the stamping out of the African slave-trade. In both cases the Emperor may have reasoned with his conscience that the end justified the means. But none the less did he escape the reproach of inconsistency; and this was a reproach which equally applied to his Majesty when, about the same time, he went to Bonn and lauded duelling as one of the manliest and most elevating habits in which German students could indulge; so that here was the curious spectacle of a Sovereign, the champion of his country's laws, practically inciting his subjects to the commission of an offence that was punishable with a minimum of three months' detention in a fortress!*

The Emperor, too, revealed more than a sneaking sympathy with those who, in a righteous cause, took the law into their own hands, as was proved, among other things, by his pardoning and subsequent decoration of General von Kirchhoff, a Brandenburg nobleman, who had entered the office of a scurrilous Jew-print, the *Berliner Tageblatt*, and fired at its editor for having given

* See p. 26.

circulation to a gross calumny about the honour of his (the General's) daughter. Kirchhoff had been sentenced by the civil tribunal to nine months' imprisonment for this attempt to take the life of the libellous and impenitent journalist of the *Jerusalemerstrasse*, but he was soon released by order of the Emperor-King. For as between Hebrew "Press-scamps" and noble Brandenburg soldiers, how could it for a moment be doubted which enjoyed the warmer sympathy of his Majesty?

The fact was that the Emperor repeatedly showed himself to be a very warm partisan, in spite of his frequent assurances that the King of Prussia "stood high above all parties." No one was ever more tempted to question this royal impartiality than Professor Rudolph Virchow, the world-renowned anatomist, when (in the autumn of 1891) he celebrated his jubilee amid such flattering attentions, no less from his fellow-citizens in Berlin, than from his fellow-scientists throughout the civilised world. But Virchow received not the least sign of royal favour; and for the very simple reason that, in addition to being the foremost pathologist in the world, he had the misfortune to be a politician, and to occupy a prominent place among the Radicals in the Prussian Chamber. The Emperor simply abhors cobblers who will not stick to their lasts; and towards political professors in particular he entertains, like Bismarck, the very deepest aversion.

Professor von Helmholtz, the eminent discoverer in the fields of sound and light, was a man not less eminent in his way than his colleague, Virchow; but in the eyes of the Emperor he had never been a "mischievous

meddler" in the domain of politics. Virchow, therefore, the Emperor passed by on the other side, frowning disapproval and displeasure all the time; but to Helmholtz, who celebrated his seventieth birthday about the same time, he turned with honeyed phrases of eulogy, and with the patent of an empty Court-title in his extended hand. No one thought these compliments to Helmholtz undeserved; but it was the time and manner of their bestowal, when all Berlin was ringing with the praises of Virchow, the pathologist and politician, which stamped his Majesty's demonstrative act with its true intent. "Your great mind," said the Emperor, in addressing Helmholtz, "always engaged in the pursuit of the purest and highest ideals, has in its lofty flight left politics, and the party intrigues connected with them, far behind it. I and my people are proud to be able to call so eminent a man as yourself ours."

There was also another non-political professor in whom the Emperor had most ostentatiously proclaimed his pride, in the belief that his brilliant discoveries would add a crowning achievement to the scientific glories of the nineteenth century, and make the reign of William II. be ever remembered for this, if for nothing else. This was Professor Dr. Robert Koch, of cholera-bacillus fame, who jumped to the conclusion that he had discovered an infallible remedy against tuberculosis in all its terrible forms. All he wanted was only a little more time to perfect his discovery before stepping forth from behind the curtain of his laboratory as one of the very greatest benefactors of the human race who had ever lived. But the Emperor himself, having meanwhile got wind

of what was passing in the brain of Koch, could brook no such delay. No; as the Sovereign of Koch, he was entitled to share in the glory of his great discovery, just as Ferdinand and Isabella added fresh lustre to their crowns from the achievements of Columbus; and Koch must therefore at once come forward to the footlights before all his thaumaturgic preparations were complete. The Professor's hand had been forced by his ambitious Sovereign, and the Professor's discovery fizzled out; yet not so much *propter hoc* as *post hoc*.

Never before, perhaps, had the medical world looked so unutterably foolish as it now did, after rushing to Berlin to beg, implore, intrigue, and even offer drops of its very heart's blood for an equivalent volume of Koch's therapeutic lymph, on the phials of which the Emperor, so to speak, had set his seal by conferring on Koch a higher decoration than had ever been given to any scholar or scientist before. As for the Prussian Government, it completely lost its head over the matter; the Minister of Public Worship (Herr von Gossler) pronouncing a parliamentary *éloge* on Koch which was understood to reflect the views of the Emperor-King. Viewed in the light of the subsequent fiasco, this speech reads like one of the most extraordinary hallucinations that ever possessed the mind of man. Either Gossler had misled the Emperor, or the Emperor had communicated too much of his own scientific enthusiasm to Gossler—his Majesty's "*Sic volo, sic jubeo*" Minister. But, in any case, the latter retired from office soon after the bursting of the Koch bubble, and thus in a noble spirit of self-sacrifice—not uncommon with Prussian

Ministers—assumed before the world the blame for all the follies which had resulted from the forcing of Koch's hand and the "fizzling out" of his cure.

A warm protector of science, the Emperor also aspired to be a munificent patron of art, though not even in this latter field could he altogether lay aside his rôle as Autocrat of All the Prussians. "*Sic volo, sic jubeo*!" was the edict which he addressed to his artists as well as to his ministers, and he has repeatedly been at loggerheads with his Academy as to the merits of a particular picture. It was this same claim to infallible judgment which made his Majesty sweep away, by one impatient motion of the hand, all the grandiose models that had been the outcome of the competition for the national monument to be erected to his grandfather, and practically take the further settlement of the matter out of the hands of Parliament into his own.

Infallible as an art critic, William II. also claims to be supreme as dramatic censor (he once reversed the decision of the annual Schiller Prize jury), though we have already seen, in connection with the *Neue Herr*, in which direction his Majesty's theatrical tastes lie. As for his literary power, is it not clearly impressed on all he says and pens? For, unlike his father, William II. is the unmistakable author of his own proclamations, speeches, and edicts, and scorns the use of a redactionary Geffcken. His Majesty would fain emulate the literary side of the character of his "ancestor"—*quasi* ante-cessor—Frederick the Great, though hitherto, in the field of pure literature, this bounding spirit of ambition has not carried him beyond the production of an "Ode to Ægir"—an effusion which was

speedily followed by several trials for *lèse-majesté*, and by the confiscation of a South German print which had made bold to cap his Majesty's performance with an "Ode to Adam."

But there was another South German publication which also sailed perilously near the wind of a criminal prosecution, and this was a pamphlet by the learned and ingenious Professor Quidde of Munich, entitled "Caligula—a Study in Roman - Caesarian Madness," which in a very short space of time reached the almost unparalleled success of a thirtieth edition. And, indeed, this character-sketch was one of the cleverest things of the kind that had ever been penned. The cap was Caligula's, but everyone well knew whom it was meant to fit, and it seemed to fit to perfection. The learned Professor gave chapter and verse, out of a multitude of classical authors, for what he said; and piled up his clever analogies with irresistible force. In Caligula's treatment of Macro, who had been the all-powerful Minister of Tiberius, the Munich writer could even include in his parallel the Emperor's dismissal of Bismarck. And then as for Caligula's nervous haste, his reckless conceit, his bids for popularity, his inconsistencies, his surprising ideas of reform, his megalomania, his *defilirium tremens*, his ostentation and extravagance, his passion for palatial yachts and colossal buildings, his "*Rast- und Ruhelosigkeit*," his divine-right claims, and even his coming home from a foreign tour with a full beard, though it was against the fashion of the time—did these and a hundred other parallel traits not prove that Professor Quidde might have sent a copy of his very clever

brochure to the Emperor, with the inscription : "*Mutato nomine de te fabula narratur*" ?

Like Caligula, Kaiser William II. soon developed a great passion for touring about and seeing the world. I have already considered the Emperor from the points of view of a divine-right Monarch, a soldier, a sailor, a Saviour of Society, a sportsman, an artist, an orator, a dramatic censor, and other facets of his Crichton-like character. It therefore now only remains for me to consider his Majesty, briefly, in his capacity as *Reise-Kaiser*, or Tourist-Emperor.

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CHAPTER IX.

A TOURIST-KAISER.

"Wilhelm Meister II."—A post-diluvian dove—William the Pacific—A travelling record—Germany's Grand Young Man—The Kaiser and the King of Italy—The Triple Alliance—" *Sempre avanti!*"—Their Italian Majesties at Potsdam—Their German Majesties at Rome—" *Sine Germaniâ, nulla salus*"—William II. and Francis Joseph—Interchange of visits—A Sadowa of the saddle—" *Kriegspiel* at Guns—Eternal brotherhood—Germany and Russia—The Tsar and the Kaiser—Visits and return visits—William II. at Narva—Caprivi on Narva and Cronstadt—The Tsar Peace-keeper a German Admiral—The Tsarevitch at Berlin—Russo-German Commercial Treaty—William II. and Nicholas II.—A new departure in German policy—The Chinese War—Europe's "Three Musketeers"—Germany the cat's-paw of France and Russia—" *Que diable allait il faire dans cette galère?*"—The Kaiser the dupe of his Allies—Germany and France—Alsace-Lorraine—The Emperor and Meissonier—Empress Frederick at Paris—The Kaiser's "fraudulent caresses"—His bellicose speeches—" *O, Strassburg! O, Strassburg!*"—The French at Kiel—Germany and England—The Kaiser's relations to his English relatives—His alleged Anglophobia—Visits to Osborne and London—Admiral of the British Fleet—Prince of Wales in Berlin—The British Fleet and German Army—The German Ocean bridged—Heligoland—"Magnifier of the Empire"—Extinguisher of the Congo Treaty—Napier and Tryon—England and Germany as colonial rivals—"Printer's ink"—On the quarter-deck of the *Royal Sovereign*.

"AT the end of this nineteenth century of ours the special characteristic of the world is its intercourse—which breaks down the barriers separating the nations, and establishes new relations between them."

These were the words which the Emperor wrote on a portrait of himself which he presented to his Postmaster-General, Herr von Stephan, a man who, by his founding of the Universal Postal Union and his promotion of cheap world-telegraphy, had done so much to break down the national barriers referred to by his Majesty. But, after Herr von Stephan, no one in Germany has been such a zealous labourer in the same field as the Emperor himself. To his own countrymen he may be known as an ardent social reformer, but to all Europe he is still more familiar as an active apostle of international intercourse and of peace. As William I. had been called the *greise Kaiser*, or "venerable Emperor," and Frederick III. the *weise Kaiser*, or "wise Emperor," so William II. had not been a year on the throne before he acquired the cognomen of the *Reise-Kaiser*, or Travelling Emperor.

He was also dubbed the "Hadrian of the nineteenth century," as well as "Wilhelm Meister II." But his *Wanderjahre* are never over, his passion for new scenes, new experience, fuller information, juster views of men and things from personal inspection, never sated. He was even called the "absentee Emperor." His Majesty's journeys soon became the favourite theme of the comic writers, some suggesting the mere vanity of being fêted and petted by foreign Courts, others simple restlessness, others this, that, and the other thing as the motive for all these Imperial peregrinations by sea and land. But his Majesty himself was ready, as ever, with his answer when next he came to dine with his doughty men of Brandenburg (March, 1890):

"In my wanderings, I not only aimed at studying foreign countries and their institutions, and establishing friendly relations with their Sovereigns. These journeys, which have been the subject of so much misapprehension, had also for me this great value that, away from party movements of the day, I could look at home affairs from afar and examine them in peace. Whoever, alone with himself on the high seas, standing on the ship's bridge, with only God's starry firmament above him, has entered into the chamber of his own heart, will not mistake the value of such a voyage. I could wish that many of my countrymen should know such hours, in which a man can give account to himself of what he has won and done. Here lies a cure for over-estimation of self, and this we all need. . . . I have therefore, after my energies had been, in the first instance, directed to securing peace abroad, turned my eyes to affairs at home."

"Securing peace abroad," as the condition precedent of all beneficent activity at home—such was the primary item in the Emperor's programme, and to this end his journeys were undertaken. William II. would be the shuttlecock in the weaving of the web of European peace. He would fly about, not as a stormy petrel, but as a post-diluvian dove with an olive leaf in his mouth. Peace, white-robed Peace, would be the patron saint of his worship. How cruelly unjust, he felt, were those who had credited him with a bellicose ambition. We have already seen how, when still Prince William, he had indignantly repudiated all such warlike designs, and in his first speech from the throne he had said :

"In foreign politics I am resolved to maintain peace with every one, so far as lies in my power. My love for the German Army, and my position in regard to it, will never tempt me to jeopardize for the country the benefits

of peace, unless the necessity of war is forced upon us by an attack on the Empire or its allies. Our Army is intended to assure peace to us, or, if peace is broken, will enable us to fight for it with honour. To use this Army for aggressive wars is far from my heart. Germany needs neither fresh military glory nor any conquests, since she has finally won for herself by fighting the right to exist as a united and independent nation."

In opening the following session of the Reichstag, the Emperor said :—

"To bring upon Germany, without necessity, the sufferings of war, even a victorious war, I should not regard as reconcilable with my Christian faith and with the duties which, as Emperor, I have taken upon myself towards the German people."

"Trust in me to preserve peace," he once said at Bremen, amid a great storm of applause, "and if the Press sometimes interprets my remarks differently, think of the old saying of another Emperor, 'An Emperor's words are not to be turned, and twisted, and quibbled over.'"
"Could I but hold the peace of Europe in the hollow of my hand," he said upon another occasion (Düsseldorf, May, 1891), "I should take very good care that it would not be broken." Speaking at the Guildhall two months later, his Majesty said :

"My aim is above all the maintenance of peace, for peace alone can give the confidence which is necessary to the healthy development of science, art, and trade. Only as long as peace reigns are we at liberty to bestow earnest thoughts upon the great problems, the solution of which, in fairness and equity, I consider the most prominent duty of our times."

But while "defence, not defiance," was ever the Emperor's motto, he held it to be his paramount duty to be always prepared for war. As he said in opening the Reichstag, May, 1890 :

"The German people recognise, as do I and the august Princes of the Confederation, that it is the duty of the Empire to protect the peace by maintaining our defensive alliances and friendly relations with foreign Powers, and in so doing to ensure the advance of well being and civilisation. But in order to accomplish this task the Empire has need of a military power in proportion to the position it holds in Europe."

We have already seen how often that military power had been increased since the Emperor's accession to the throne;* and he has repeatedly warned the possible foes of Germany what they have to expect should ever they be so insane as to draw their swords upon her. As the domestic foes of the Empire would all be "dashed to pieces," so its foreign assailants would also find—what they would find. "Should it be God's will," said his Majesty once, at Königsberg, "that I should be called upon to defend myself and to guard my frontiers, the enemy will find the sword of East Prussia not less keen than it was in 1870."

And again at the same place :

"It is my duty, and I shall take care as long as I can, to preserve peace. The consciousness that all Prussians stand shoulder to shoulder by their King, and are ready to sacrifice everything, gives the Prussian King the power to speak these words of peace with confidence. He is able to maintain peace, and I feel that those who should

* See p. 202 *et passim*.

venture to break the peace will not be spared a lesson which they will not forget for a hundred years. . . . One thing I promise you, I shall let no one touch the province, and if it should be attempted, my sovereignty will place itself in the way like a rock of bronze."

"Gentlemen," said his Majesty once, with a significance as grave as it was curt, to all the foreign officers who had been attending the autumn manoeuvres in Hanover, "you have seen me at the head of my troops, which are the best guarantee of the peace of Europe. My compliments to your respective Sovereigns and Presidents. Adieu!" And next to his troops, the Emperor considered that his own continual travelling about was the best guarantee of the European peace. With his Majesty's accession round of visits I have already dealt somewhat in detail, for the simple reason that they were the first of their kind, and typical of all his subsequent trips; so that to these latter I need only now refer in a summary way in connection with their general effect on the foreign relations of the Empire, and with our consideration of his Majesty's character as a Tourist-Kaiser, or travelling apostle of peace.

Nor are there many apostles of anything whatever who do their 19,000 miles a year, which was the travelling record of William II. in one typical twelvemonth. During the year ending 15th August, 1894, the Emperor had spent 166 days at Berlin or Potsdam, and been on the wing for 199 days. Within that period his Majesty had swept across Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy, Switzerland, Sweden and Norway, Denmark, and England; while in his own Empire there was not an important

town in which, during this time, he had not reviewed or alarmed a garrison, presided at a banquet, attended a wedding or a funeral, unveiled a monument, or done something else to keep his subjects on edge—always, of course, with the accompaniment of a speech. Thus it was that, on learning what the Emperor's travelling mileage had been for this twelvemonth, one unkindly critic wished to know what his Majesty's talking mileage had been for the same period.

Indeed, the Grand Young Man of Germany was just as fond of speechifying on his travels as the Grand Old Man of England, and the glamour of his eloquence was almost as great. For there was no German Court to which the Emperor rushed to pay his duty call which did not receive the impression that this was the Court which his Majesty esteemed above all others; just as there were none of the Prussian provinces, that banqueted his Majesty in turn, which rose not from table under the firm conviction that this was the Emperor-King's pet portion of his monarchy. For if the Brandenburgers were lauded by their Sovereign as by far his best and bravest liegemen, the Westphalians would next be told that they were the very salt of his Majesty's subjects; and if the Rhinelanders were eulogised for their unparalleled achievements in war, the Pomeranians were afterwards assured that, as soldiers, it was simply impossible for them to be excelled. The East Prussians were the stoutest and truest of all; the Silesians the most indomitable; the Hanoverians the toughest, nor second to any now in loyalty; while as for the Schleswig-Holsteiners, had they, as combining all the best qualities

of the Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic races, and as being the special countrymen of his devoted consort—had they not established a pre-eminent hold on his Majesty's heart?

Moreover, it was just the same with the various foreign Sovereigns who came to Berlin to return the Emperor's visits. Each of them was made to leave again under the impression that he was his German Majesty's most particular friend. Of these foreign Sovereigns the first to come were the King of Italy and the Emperor of Austria, who naturally enough had a special motive for cultivating friendly relations with his German Majesty; and after them the Tsar of Russia. So taking these countries in the order of the return visits of their respective Sovereigns, let me briefly glance at their relations to Germany under William II.

In the case of Italy and Austria these relations could not well have been better. For seven years they were undisturbed by a single disagreement. As the Triple Alliance was the corner-stone of the European system when William II. succeeded to the throne, so he ever regarded it as at once his chief duty and his chief interest to maintain it intact. This Alliance had originally taken the form of a mutually defensive treaty between Germany and Austria, signed October 7, 1879. In January, 1883, during the Foreign Ministry of Signor Mancini, Italy had converted this dual Alliance into a triple one, which, in March, 1887, was renewed by the Depretis Cabinet (Count Robilant being Foreign Minister) for a further period of four years, and again in 1891 for another term of six. The text of the Italian

portion of the Alliance has never been published like the Austro-German Treaty; but there is every reason to believe, for one thing, that Italy and Germany agreed to make common front against any attack by France on either, precisely in the same way as Germany and Austria entered into this mutual obligation with respect to possible aggression from Russia.

Italy perhaps, from the nature of the case, has always been a more uncertain ally of Germany than Austria, and for this very reason the Kaiser has courted every opportunity of conciliating the favour of the Italian people, and cultivating the friendship of their ruler. Consequently, when King Humbert went to Berlin in May, 1889, to return the Emperor's visit of the previous autumn, his arrival was in the nature of a triumphal entry such as had not been seen since the Emperor himself conducted his blooming Schleswig-Holstein bride into the capital. The mutual health-drinking of the two allies on this occasion indicated an advance even on the friendly fervour which they had exhibited at Rome in the previous year; and while the Emperor, after quoting the *Sempre avanti!* of the House of Savoy, toasted his royal visitor and the "brave soldiers of Italy," King Humbert replied that—

"Having separately achieved their unity, Germany and Italy now form a guarantee of the peace of Europe. My own soldiers, for whom your Majesty has such kindly words of appreciation, and your Army, whereof I have seen such a brilliant portion to-day, will know how to fulfil this mission."

No one could doubt that the personal feelings of the

two monarchs for one another were of the most cordial kind ; and when, in the late autumn of the same year (1889), the Emperor went to Athens and Constantinople, he again spent several days with King Humbert at Monza, both in going and coming. As he had embarked at Genoa, so he returned by way of Venice, and was everywhere again received by the Italian people with the utmost enthusiasm. Not to speak of the presence of the Prince of Naples at Berlin in the summer of 1890, and again at the German Manœuvres of 1893—when the greatest attention was paid him—the Imperial visit of 1889 at Monza was again returned in June, 1892, at Potsdam, when King Humbert and his consort were treated with the most effusive hospitality.

The last time their Italian Majesties had been to Potsdam was when they came to the christening of the youngest daughter of the Crown Prince and Princess, who was named after Queen Margherita, and now they had come to her betrothal. At the banquet in honour of this occasion the Emperor made an exceptionally long and perfervid speech on the virtues of his father—"that already myth-surrounded hero-figure"—who had been such a devoted friend of the House of Savoy. "Vanished now is that heroic form, but there still remains the close relations of the most fraternal friendship uniting our two Houses and ourselves. . . The blonde Germania greets her beautiful sister Italia, and through my mouth she also greets your Majesties"—with more in the same strain. And, to crown all the symbolic attentions of that festive time, King Humbert was escorted into Berlin by a squadron of Queen Victoria's

Prussian Dragoon Guards, which had been selected for this service to typify England's attitude of moral sympathy with the objects of the Triple Alliance.

Next year (April, 1893) their Italian Majesties celebrated their silver wedding, and on the anniversary of Düppel—after presenting a new standard to the Queen of England's Dragoons—the Emperor, accompanied this time by his consort, started again for Rome, with a magnificent silver statue of Italia as a symbolic present for his ally, to help in honouring the occasion, and to become the object of even greater popular ovations than had been showered upon him in 1888. The Italians had lately been too much exposed to petty persecution and obloquy on the part of the French not to be aware of the true value of their country's inclusion in the Triple Alliance; and when, on the day of his arrival in Rome, the Kaiser again presented himself on the balcony of the Quirinal at the side of King Humbert, and the Empress at the side of Queen Margherita, the mighty concourse of citizens burst out, as in the days when Pompey used to pass the streets of Rome, with such—

“An universal shout
That Tiber trembled underneath her banks,
To hear the replication of their sounds
Made in her concave shores.”

The Kaiser only spoke the words of sober truth as well as of festive sentiment when, in toasting their Italian Majesties at their silver-wedding banquet, he said that “Hand-in-hand with our own personal friendship goes the sympathy which unites the peoples of

Germany and Italy, and which has now again found expression with additional force." I have already had occasion to remark that the Emperor now left behind him at the Vatican a much more favourable impression than he had done on the occasion of his first visit to the Pope, which is tantamount to saying that he had become wiser by the experience of five years. The only jarring note in the music of his second visit to Rome—which included trips to Naples and Spezzia—was sounded from Berlin, and the discord grated on his ear just after he returned to the Quirinal from a grand review of one of his Italian ally's finest Army Corps.

This was the intelligence that the Reichstag threatened to throw out the Bill for making a further addition to Germany's fighting strength—a piece of news which had the effect of making the Emperor hasten his return home, with the assurance that he would make up for his abrupt departure by coming back to beloved Italy all the sooner. But a few weeks later, his Majesty was able to flash to his Italian ally the joyful tidings that the new Reichstag, elected in place of the one which he had been forced to dissolve, had proved much more compliant with his military demands, and that the objects of the Triple Alliance were now more than ever secured.

Far from adding to the Italian Army, some politicians in that country had positively begun to plead for its reduction as the only means of saving the nation from certain bankruptcy. But to this it was replied that anyone who lives in the neighbourhood of possible incendiaries—the French, for instance—must recognise the wisdom

of paying a very heavy fire-insurance on his premises ; and, furthermore, that if Italy were to retire from the Triple Alliance, she would most certainly have to increase, instead of reduce, her armaments, seeing that she would then have to prepare for the contingency of fronting her foes alone.

The Emperor was quite aware that the military expenditure of Italy was rather out of proportion to her purse. But, on the other hand, his Government did all it could to better her finances by making her certain important concessions in the field of the new Commercial Treaty (1891), which, as in the case of Austria, was really a kind of supplement to the Triple Alliance. There is nothing which binds together nations so much as the ties of a common interest in the field of trade, and in proportion as Italy in this field was boycotted by malignant France, she was favoured by Germany and carefully taught to believe—*Sine Germaniâ, nulla salus*.

It was precisely similar with the relations between Germany and her other partner in the Triple Alliance. Within half a dozen years the Kaiser had had as many meetings with the King of Italy, but with the Emperor of Austria his personal intercourse was still more frequent, and, if possible, still more cordial and confiding. The bearing of William II. to Francis Joseph was more than that of a fellow-Sovereign and ally ; it also savoured of the tender and ever-watchful attention of an affectionate son to a venerable father. To the Emperor of Austria the youthful Kaiser looked up almost as admiringly as he had formerly done to his own grandsire. His

Majesty was using far more than the language of mere conventional compliment when he once toasted his Austrian ally as "a shining pattern of all military and sovereign virtues, as well as of the noblest performance of duty."

And how exquisite the attentions that were shown Francis Joseph when, six months after the tragic loss of his son and heir, Prince Rudolph, he repaired to Berlin to return the Kaiser's visit of the year before. "My Army," said the Kaiser in toasting his Imperial guest, after the inevitable review, "is proud to have been able to submit itself to your Majesty's keen inspection. My people, no less than my Army, will hold firm and true to the Alliance which we have concluded; and the latter is well aware that, if it is the will of Providence, it will have to stand up for the peace of both our countries, and fight shoulder to shoulder with the brave Austro-Hungarian Army." To which Francis Joseph replied by drinking "to the inseparable fraternity and brotherhood in arms of our two Armies as the best pledge of the European peace." One Berlin journal only voiced the opinion of both Empires when it now wrote that "as long as the present grouping of the Powers continued, the world would be spared the horrors of war."

Later in this same year (1889) the two Emperors again met at Innsbruck, on the Kaiser's return journey from Constantinople; and next autumn Francis Joseph was again the guest of his German ally at Rohnstock, on the occasion of the manoeuvres in Silesia, their Majesties being accompanied by their respective Chancellors,

Counts Kalnoky and Caprivi. For this was the year of Bismarck's dismissal from office, and it behoved his successor to take this *vivâ voce* opportunity of showing that there was no divergence between his own views and those of the author of the Austro-German Alliance. On this Alliance the two Emperors now again publicly, so to speak, set their seals by exchanging martial compliments on the mimic field of battle, in presence of the assembled commanders of two Army Corps and the military representatives of all the Powers, William II. declaring that the Army which had drawn another eulogy from his Austrian ally was "a pledge as well for the continuance as for the execution of existing treaties."

Business being thus disposed of, pleasure followed, and the two Emperors proceeded to Styria for a few days' chamois shooting, his German Majesty proving second to none as a rifle-shot, in spite of his virtually being a one-armed sportsman. His reception in Vienna again took the form of a triumphal entry, and the whole Press of the two Empires once more burst out into a hymn-like chorus of peace, which only rose to a higher strain when, a little later, Count Caprivi journeyed to Milan to confer with Signor Crispi, and to be honoured by King Humbert, at Monza, with the Order of the Annunciation.

All of these things furnished reading to the isolated French at once significant and sad ; and their significance became all the more apparent when, in the following June (1891), just as they were preparing to send their fleet to Cionstadt, the Kaiser casually remarked, as he

was dropping down the Elbe from Hamburg to Heligoland, that the Triple Alliance had again been renewed for a further period of six years. Then the French and the Russians went through their mock fraternal play at Cronstadt, to the perturbation of some and the amusement of others. "As Christians," said the Emperor a few weeks later, on returning from England, "we must all hope that peace will be preserved; but should it fall out otherwise, it will not be our blame."

That the two Imperial allies had not viewed the Cronstadt demonstration with the eyes of those whom it merely amused, may be inferred from the fact that they again met in the September of this year, on the occasion of the manoeuvres in Lower Austria (Schwarzenau), accompanied by their respective Chancellors; and while the Ministers were discussing the serious change in the situation, this sudden turn of the international kaleidoscope, their monarchs rode about watching the *Kriegspiel* of a couple of Army Corps, and again there was effusive talk about the everlasting brotherhood of arms between the two Empires. At the open-air *critique* which concluded the manoeuvres, Francis Joseph remarked that both he and his German ally only aimed at peace; but should they be called to arms, they would certainly come out of the struggle victorious. The Kaiser spoke in the same sense, with his unfailing allusion to the "shoulder to shoulder" community of the two armies; and soon thereafter the community of interests between the two nations received fresh expression in the new Commercial Treaty, which was really nothing more than another Treaty of Alliance

—one more link in the re-knit chain of international friendship which had been snapped at Sadowa.

In the autumn of the following year (1892) the Kaiser again presented himself in the Kaiserstadt, where the first thing he did was to inspect the officers of his own Guards who had just done the long-distance ride between Berlin and Vienna, in cross-competition with a corresponding number of Austrian cavaliers riding in the opposite direction. The German Emperor had evinced the very warmest interest in this competition—in which his cousin, Prince Frederick Leopold, took part—as calculated to promote a feeling of friendly rivalry between the two armies; nor did he appear to be very much affected by the outcry of the prevention-of-cruelty-to-animal portion of Europe which almost wept for pity at the sufferings of the poor horses that had to do the long four hundred and fifty miles ride. As it was, the Austrian riders revenged themselves for a Koniggratz of the needle-gun by winning a Sadowa of the saddle; but what cared the German Kaiser for that if it was the means of promoting the *camaraderie* of the Allied Armies?

Next year, as we have seen (1893), he must needs go to Rome to fan the fire of the Triple Alliance into a brighter glow there; and the flame having shot up to an astonishing height above the Quirinal, it now again behoved the Emperor to apply his bellows at the Hofburg. Accordingly, after indulging in an unprecedented amount of sham-fighting and speechifying among his troops in Alsace-Lorraine, and other parts of South Germany, the Emperor hastened away to Hungary

(Guns), where, at the side of his Austrian ally, he had the inexpressible satisfaction of witnessing the manœuvres of no fewer than four Army Corps, numbering about 130,000 men—a very much larger force than the one which his own father had led against the Austrians into Bohemia. But his Majesty was not content with merely witnessing the evolutions of this colossal host. No; his happiness was only complete when, at the head of his own Hussar regiment, he had stormed in upon the enemy along with the stupendous masses of horsemen whose function it was to open the panoramic fighting. But Guns will be remembered, less for the brilliantly executed charge in which the Emperor took part, than for the brilliantly conceived telegram of conciliation which he now despatched to his suffering and resentful co-Chancellor.

In the following spring (1894), the two Emperors again met, both at Abbazia on the Austrian Riviera, and at Vienna, when they renewed their vows of eternal friendship and fidelity to their treaty engagements. It was almost as great a blow to the German Emperor to hear of the death of the Archduke Albrecht, in the following spring (1895), as it had been for him to hear of the tragic end of Crown Prince Rudolph six years previously, and he hurried to Vienna to follow to the grave the father of the Austrian Army, the victor of Custozza. This was the eleventh meeting of the allied Emperors within seven years, and it could not be doubted that they were the best of friends. Whatever might be said of the Triple Alliance, the Austro-German portion of the pact was still, at least, solid, and likely to endure as the cardinal fact of the European situation.

But how had it, meanwhile, been faring with the relations between Germany and Russia? We have already seen that, in obedience to the dying behests of his grandfather, who had enjoined upon him the greatest consideration towards Russia, William II. had rushed away to St. Petersburg before he had been a month upon the throne (July, 1888). But it was October of the following year before Alexander III. returned the visit in Berlin, after the Austrian Emperor and the King of Italy had already been there, and the contrast between their reception and his was very marked—as far as the Press and public were concerned. For it was felt that the Tsar had taken his own time in returning the visit of the Kaiser; and that even when he did at last come, it was only on his way home from Copenhagen. A witness of all the incidents of this Imperial meeting, I thought that the intercourse between the two monarchs was marked by a decided sense of *gêne* on both sides, especially on that of the Tsar, who replied with a very formal brevity to his entertainer when the latter drank to the health of “my honoured friend and guest, his Majesty the Emperor of Russia, and to the continuance of the friendship which has existed between our Houses for more than a century, and which I am resolved to cultivate as a legacy derived from my ancestors.”

On the occasion, too, of a lunch offered the Tsar by the officers of the Kaiser-Alexander regiment of the Guards, the Emperor indulged in a most impassioned speech about the past brotherhood-in-arms between Russia and Prussia, drinking to the “brave defenders of Sebastopol, and the valiant combatants of Plevna”

But this could not move the tactiturn Tsar to more than a curt and colourless reply. The Kaiser had referred to his Russian visitor as his "honoured friend," but shortly before leaving home, the Tsar had plaintively remarked that "Russia's only true and sincere friend in all Europe" was the Prince of Montenegro. And, indeed, the isolation of Russia at this time seemed to be as great as that of France.

True, William II. had professed his friendship for Alexander III.; but this friendship, the Tsar knew full well, was secondary and subordinate to that which united his German Majesty and his co-partners in the Triple Alliance. The Tsar had a very suspicious nature, and he could not help feeling that his visit to Berlin had been preceded by the Emperor's first visit to Osborne, where he had been made an Admiral of the British Fleet, just as it was immediately followed by his Majesty's trip to Constantinople, much against the advice of Bismarck, who deemed this journey inconsistent with "consideration towards Russia."

In the following spring Bismarck was dismissed from office, much to the disappointment of the Tsar Peacekeeper, and it was to allay any apprehensions which might have been aroused in the breast of the Tsar, that William II., in the autumn of the same year (1890), returned to Russia with General Caprivi in his train to assure his Imperial "friend" that his change of Chancellor implied no change of policy. The pretext for this second visit to Russia was the Emperor's desire to see the autumn manœuvres near Narva, where William II. hoped to achieve as great a victory over

the suspicious heart of Alexander III. as Charles XII. had won over the semi-savage hosts of Peter the Great. "The Emperor," said Bismarck afterwards, in his exiled bitterness, "fancied that he would be able to 'manage' the Russians, politically speaking, by means of his own great personal amiability"; though the ex-Chancellor hinted that his Majesty had signally failed of his object. That, however, was not the opinion of Count Caprivi, who declared in the Reichstag in the November of the following year (1891)—after Osborne, with its grand naval review (1889), and London, with its state reception of the Emperor, had been replied to by the Franco-Russian fraternisation at Cronstadt :

"As for the Russian journey of his Majesty the Emperor, it is said that his stay at Narva had a very bad effect. I had the honour to be there, and returned with the conviction that the effect was excellent. The intercourse of the two Sovereigns, which was bound to be friendly, owing to their position and relationship, took the most favourable form possible. I should not say this if I did not know for certain that the other side was equally satisfied. Then came the Cronstadt meeting. People were disquieted by it, and reproached the Government with the very friendly reception of our western neighbour at that place. We have no power to prevent other people from shaking hands in friendship. We renewed the Triple Alliance, which had already existed for years. . . . The Cronstadt meeting has increased the self-reliance of our western neighbours, but it has only cleared the situation."

No hard and fast alliance had been the outcome of Cronstadt, as the German Emperor knew full well. Moreover, there is every reason to believe that at his next meeting with the Tsar, at Kiel, in the following year

(June, 1892), he was solemnly assured that Russia would never mobilise a single man to help France in recovering Alsace-Lorraine. It was to Kiel where Alexander III., coming again from Copenhagen, had gone for a single day to return the Emperor William's second visit, of two years before, at Narva, and, arriving as Emperor of Russia, he had departed again as an Admiral of the German Navy.

That was very disagreeable reading for the French, who had imagined that they had got the Tsar all to themselves, but who were now astonished to find that his Majesty had drunk to his "dear friend and cousin," and expressed himself as delighted with his new honour. This was the last that the two Emperors were to see of each other personally; but in January of the following year (1893), the Tsarevitch came to Berlin to represent his father at the wedding of the Emperor's sister, Princess Margaret, and was treated with the utmost distinction. On this occasion, the French were again reminded by the Emperor that the friendship between Russia and Prussia was of very much older date, and likely even to be more enduring, than the intimacy between France and Russia. And was a friendship which had been ratified with blood to be suddenly puffed away by the popping of French champagne-corks at Cronstadt and Toulon? The French themselves were in high hopes that it would—the more so as in the course of the summer of this same year ('93) a customs-war, of a very serious and threatening kind, broke out between Germany and Russia, just in time to intensify the insane jubilation of the French over the presence of the Russian fleet, under Admiral Avellan, at

Toulon—the return compliment for the visit of Admiral Gervais to Cronstadt.

But the *Schadenfreude*, or malicious joy, of the French was premature. For the customs-war referred to presently resulted in a very much more substantial alliance between Germany and Russia, than accrued to France with the latter Power as the outcome of all the mutual embracings and other imbecilities of Cronstadt and Toulon. Not one single scrap of written paper had the French to show as the expression of their “alliance” with their new-found friends; but, on the other hand, the relations between Germany and Russia had now been placed on a very much more satisfactory footing than before by their new Commercial Treaty, which political motives avowedly underlay. Dining with Count Caprivi in the February (1894) following Toulon (October, 1893), the Emperor remarked that the political aspects of the Treaty were so significant that he could not conceive of its being rejected by the Reichstag on account of any of its mere commercial drawbacks.

After the signature of the Commercial Treaty, the Tsar and all his family went and dined at the German Embassy, a thing he had never done before, as was duly pointed out by the journalists of Berlin to the crest-fallen French. It had been said of William II. that the real test of his statesmanship would be found in the way he managed his relations to Russia, and at the death of Alexander III., in November, 1894, these relations had never been better. The Kaiser had always entertained an honest liking for the Tsarevitch, who was now Nicholas II., and nothing ever gave him greater pleasure

than the Grand Duke's engagement to Princess Alix of Hesse. For not only was the Princess a German one; she was also his Majesty's own first cousin, and her presence at St. Petersburg would be an additional pledge of peace between the two countries.

Never had their relations been more cordial than they now were, and the proof of this is that Germany even went the length of supporting Russia in her effort to rob the Japanese of some of the legitimate spoils of their victorious war with the Chinese. France, too, was a party to this diplomatic combination to deprive Japan of the foothold which she had secured on the Liao Tong Peninsula of the Asiatic mainland, to the detriment of China and Russia, but of no other Power. Yet it is probable that France only joined the coalition on seeing that her abstention would have the effect of throwing her Russian "ally" of Cronstadt and Toulon into the arms of Germany. Possibly the Kaiser regarded this as a fine opportunity of detaching Russia from her sentimental attachment to France, but the French insisted on putting their finger into the pie as well.

This was one of the riskiest things the Emperor had ever done—his first embarkation in a foreign policy of rash adventure. It was enough to make his grandfather turn in his grave—his grandfather who, in his first speech from the Imperial throne, had declared that Germany, devoted to her own domestic tasks, would pursue a policy of strict non-intervention abroad. Never had a louder thunder of applause ever shaken the walls of the Reichstag than when Herr von Bennigsen, on the same occasion, expressed "the hope that, in the new-born

Empire, the days of meddling with the internal affairs of other nations should never return under any pretext or form." But William II. had evidently forgotten all this, or he surely never would have committed the Empire to so dangerous a step as that of active diplomatic intervention on behalf of Russia's interests in the East—for those of Germany itself were but little affected by the Treaty of Shimonoseki—hand in hand with the very Power, France, whose incurable habit of meddling with the affairs of others had been the unutterable curse of Germany for centuries.

Most certainly the old Emperor had never contemplated anything of this kind when, on his death-bed, he enjoined upon his grandson the duty of steady complaisance towards Russia. Bulgaria had been "Hecuba" to the wisely unsentimental Bismarck; but William II., from Heaven only knows what motives, must needs rush away to the uttermost verge of the earth to put his foot down as one of Europe's Three Musketeers, and demand of the Japanese that they should drop their prey. Had the Japanese but shown a bolder and more stubborn front, it would at once have been seen how slender were the ties of common interest and common discipline uniting the Three Musketeers. But, to the surprise of all, they at once collapsed before this new Triple Alliance, and hastened to comply with its demands, though, had they only known it, they might have exploded this unnatural coalition with the prick of a pen.

The Three Musketeers had played a most audacious game of bluff, and won at the first go. But had the Japanese countered in the same manner, the German

Emperor, for one, would have looked extremely foolish. As it was, he suffered the proverbial fate of all who try to sit on two stools. For behind his back his two co-partners in the diplomatic game set to work and secured to themselves the advantages of a Chinese loan of sixteen millions—a loan financed by France, and guaranteed (for a consideration) by Russia. The policy of Germany had become the laughing-stock of Europe, and not without truth was it said of her Emperor that, when he came to drain his glass at Kiel—at the opening of the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal—in response to the congratulations of all the naval Powers, he would find at the bottom of this glass the bitter dregs of Germany's late humiliation. No; the Kaiser ought not to have ventured into that Japanese galley without considering well the respective characters of his fellow-oarsmen, especially him of France.

For seven long years the Emperor had been trying hard to curry favour with the French, but with indifferent success. Perhaps the chief aim of his foreign policy had been to make France forget that Alsace-Lorraine once belonged to her (if only in the sense that stolen property may be said to belong to a thief). But there never were any signs that the French powers of memory had begun to fail, or that the Republic looked upon the Treaty of Frankfort in the light of a lasting agreement. On the other hand, the Emperor had assured the French, soon after his succession, in his famous Frankfort-on-the-Oder speech, that Germany was prepared to sacrifice all her Army, nay, all her male population, before parting with a single inch of soil

which she had recovered at such a terrible cost. Moreover, on the occasion of his various visits to the conquered provinces, he generally contrived to convey to them with more or less emphasis, that "German they were, and German they would remain."

There were even times when his Majesty seemed to have forgotten that there was such a thing as French susceptibility, otherwise he surely never would have suggested to the King of Italy, on the occasion of the latter's first visit to Berlin in 1889, to return home by way of Strassburg, whither his Imperial host would accompany him and treat him to a grand review on the Polygon of the fortified capital of Alsace. This, indeed, would have been such a solemn ratification of the compact between Germany and Italy to defend their territories against all comers, as must have recalled the agreement between Alexander I. of Russia and Frederick William III. of Prussia, over the coffin of Frederick the Great, to make common cause in abolishing Napoleon. The scheme, too, was only abandoned at the last moment on the urgent advice of Bismarck and Crispi, who were both in Berlin at the time; but the mere rumour of the plan sufficed to throw the politicians of the Boulevards into a violent state of patriotic commotion, one journal declaring that the only answer on the part of France to such a visit must be the mobilisation of the 6th Army Corps.

But the Emperor, it is to be feared, was guilty of another still graver error of judgment in his dealings with France; and that was his encouraging, or, at any rate, allowing his mother to proceed on a visit to Paris in

the spring of 1891. His Majesty himself had just addressed to the Academy of Fine Arts, at Paris, his condolence and reflections on the death of Meissonier; and possibly it might have occurred to the Empress Frederick, even if it was not suggested to her by her son, to profit by the favourable impression so far produced at Paris by the Emperor's message, and proceed thither as an unofficial emissary of peace and reconciliation. Her Majesty would invite the Paris artists to exhibit their works at Berlin, and otherwise bear about the olive branch.

But this olive branch was very nearly converted into a firebrand. For the first few days of her visit all went well enough. But when it was found that the Empress—not content with visiting the art collections, and ascending the Eiffel Tower—actually drove out on the top of Count Münster's four-in-hand to see all the sights of Versailles—including the Hall of Mirrors, where the German Empire had been proclaimed—as well as to St. Cloud, which had been burned down by the shells of the Prussians—then the patience of the Déroulède patriots utterly gave way, the Press began to register its protests with no uncertain voice, and there were even held indignation meetings which called upon the Empress to quit Paris without delay. Nor were the apprehensions of the Emperor on account of his mother, and the possible consequences of her visit, altogether allayed until he heard that she had curtailed her stay and hurried to England, beyond the reach of such personal insults as had once been offered to the *roi Uhlan*, King Alphonso of Spain, who had dared to return home through Paris after accepting the

chiefship of a Prussian Lancer regiment garrisoned at Strassburg.

Quailing before the storm of abuse which had burst over their original promise to the Empress to send their pictures to Berlin, the Paris artists now repented them of their unpatriotic purpose and recanted; while to one journal, which regretted that Meissonier himself was not alive to speak the last word on the Berlin exhibits, the painter's widow wrote: "Yes; his soul, thoroughly French, was on a level with his genius. Never would he have exhibited at Berlin, and not a German since the war ever crossed his threshold."

Someone had blundered terribly in connection with this affair, but there was every reason to believe that, as between mother and son, the balance of tact and discretion in this case was decidedly in favour of the latter. Three years later the Emperor was credited with saying to a Frenchman that he meant to visit the Paris Exhibition of 1900; but even if he said so, in spite of the recollection of the incident above referred to, he was soon given to understand, by an outburst of French opinion on the subject, that he had better abandon his purpose unless, before starting for Paris, he "restored her freedom to Alsace-Lorraine." "As our strength augments," said one representative writer, "Germany will learn that we are as little at the mercy of fraudulent caresses" ("theatrical embraces" was another expression) "as of her battalions. If she wishes, once for all, to suppress the enmity of a mighty neighbour, she will know that this service must be paid for."

As "fraudulent caresses" the French had considered

all those little acts of courtesy, and even of magnanimity, by which the Emperor, from time to time, had sought to conciliate them—the military honours, for example, that were paid to the bones of the Great Napoleon's organising Carnot, grandfather of the President of the Republic, when removed from Magdeburg to France; the wreath he sent to be laid on the bier of Marshal MacMahon, at once the hero and the victim of Sedan; his message of condolence on the death of Marshal Canrobert, who had worked the Prussian Guards such awful woe at St. Privat; his touching telegram of sympathy, on the assassination of President Carnot, and his pardoning of two French officers—who had been sentenced as spies to a long term of imprisonment in the fortress of Glatz—on the day of his funeral; the marked attentions he had shown to Jules Simon at the Labour Conference in Berlin; his relaxation of the very stringent passport rules in Alsace-Lorraine affecting travellers from France; and a hundred other little courtesies and compliments.

But the worst of it was that, while thus trying to salve the wounds of the sensitive French heart with one hand, the Emperor every now and then committed the mistake of re-opening them with the other. For again and again in his speeches the French were significantly reminded of the exceeding sharpness of the German sword; of Waterloo—where the “warriors of Prussia and Britain, standing shoulder to shoulder, had crushed the hereditary foe”; of Arcis-sur-Aube, where the banded hosts of Russia and Prussia had overwhelmed the overweening legions of Napoleon; of Mars-la-Tour, where the heroic men of

Brandenburg had held at bay a Gallic army five times their number; of Malplaquet, where the English and Prussians, fighting shoulder to shoulder, had again burst asunder the ranks of Marshal Villars; and of Erfurt, whence there "had emanated the lightning-flash of revenge which dashed to the ground the Corsican *parvenu* who had humbled to the dust and outraged the Prussian people in such a shocking manner."

Nor were the French ever allowed to indulge in undisturbed dreams of recovering Alsace-Lorraine. For the Emperor was a much more frequent visitor to the Reichsland than ever his grandfather had been. He had purchased a private estate at Urville, near Metz, in order to ingratiate himself with the inhabitants, and thither he often went to shoot; a magnificent palace was rising for him at Strassburg, of which he said, in replying to an address of welcome from the Burgomaster:—

"Long ago when a boy, I, like every other German, sang the song, '*O, Strassburg! O, Strassburg! Du wunderschöne Stadt,*' and prayed to God that Strassburg, for which city I always felt an especial sympathy, might again become German. Since then that wish has been happily fulfilled. Although it was not granted to me, myself, to assist in its accomplishment, I treasure Strassburg as one of the best of German cities, and I am convinced that the Strassburgers themselves are happy in their re-union with the German Empire."

France was the only European country of importance in which the Emperor had not yet been able to gratify his passion for travel. But if unable to keep himself in evidence with the French through the medium of their eyes, he could at least appeal to their ears by means of his warning

speeches, the cannon-thunder of his *Kriegspiel* at their very gates, and his trumpet-tongued addresses to his Army. At the end of seven years, what had been the general result of the Emperor's thus alternately blowing hot and cold on the passions of the French, of his trying to salve the wounds of their sensitive hearts with one hand, and re-opening them with the other? To what extent had he succeeded in improving the relations between the two countries, and making it possible for him to complete the circuit of Europe by visiting Paris in his capacity as Tourist-Kaiser?

These questions cannot be better answered than by recalling the extreme reluctance and bad grace with which the Republic accepted the invitation of the Emperor to send a squadron to the opening of the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal, and to the surly, sulking behaviour of that squadron during its presence at Kiel, where its crews were forbidden to fraternise with their German mates; where it remained in total darkness when other squadrons were brilliantly illuminated; and where it would not submit to the crowning indignity of being reviewed by the Emperor, at the close of the festivities, in common with the ironclads of the other Powers. Never, perhaps, in the whole course of her Republican history, had France made such a lamentable and unworthy display of petty spite. Far from being a "grand nation," she seemed to be the smallest of any.

Not even at Kiel could the French refrain from indulging in a political demonstration. For they had purposely forgathered with the Russians in the Great Belt, and steamed arm in arm, so to speak, into Kiel

harbour, as if to remind Germany of the existence of the Franco-Russian "alliance"—a word which had been officially used in the French Chamber, but found no place whatever in the letter accompanying the order of St. Andrew which the Tsar sent to President Faure immediately before the ceremony at Kiel. Once more, thought the exultant French, the wind had been taken out of the German sails. But what should the ever-deviceful Kaiser presently do but counter by placing *à la suite* of the Imperial Navy, the Grand Duke Alexis, Grand Admiral of the Russian Fleet, as well as by sending a laurel-wreath to decorate the standard of his English regiment, the "Royals," on the anniversary of Waterloo!

The appointment of the Emperor to the chiefship of the Royal Dragoons, on the occasion of his meeting his English grandmother at the Coburg wedding (April, 1894), with its Russian betrothal (Tsarevitch to Princess Alix of Hesse), was only the latest of the numerous signs that, ever since his Majesty's first visit to the Queen at Osborne, in the autumn of 1889, the relations between the two Courts—and, indeed, also between the two Governments—had been of the most friendly and cordial kind. We saw that, owing to the family estrangements, consequent on the painful incidents and misunderstandings connected with the death of the Emperor Frederick, his son had not included Queen Victoria among the Sovereigns whom he hastened to visit during his first year of his reign.

But for this initial neglect of his royal grandmother of England he soon made up by courtesies and attentions

such as he has shown to no other crowned head—including even his co-parties to the Triple Alliance. For with Queen Victoria, William II. has had more meetings, in England and Germany, than with any other of his fellow-monarchs. The Kaiser's annual visit to England is no longer an incident, it is a positive institution; and it avowedly gives him more pleasure than any of the other peregrinations which form his staple occupation during the summer months.

Of all the misconceptions of which the young Kaiser continued to be the victim during the early period of his reign, none was more distressing to him than the assumption, so studiously fostered in certain quarters, that he bore a deep aversion to the country of his mother's birth. As a matter of fact, it was just all the other way about. His Majesty was anything but unaffected by the spirit of commendable Chauvinism characteristic of young Germany. He was, in truth, the chief exponent of this Chauvinism. But, otherwise, it is not too much to say that his sentiments at this time might have been expressed in the words of Bismarck himself, when the latter wrote, during the Frankfort period of his career, that, after his own native country, his strongest predilection was for England and the English.

Moreover, as time went on, and family misunderstandings were cleared away, it began to appear that the Emperor's admiration for the country and countrymen of his mother was reciprocal. For after the first froth had evaporated from the champagne-cup at Berlin, Englishmen began to feel that here was a liquor, in spite

of some of its failings, very much to their liking; and the more they tasted it, the more it pleased their palate. For the grandson of their own gracious Sovereign turned out to be honest, courageous, energetic, and original—a man of untiring physical and mental activity; a man of action, in spite of all his words; a man who knew his own mind, and had, in fact, in him the making of a really great monarch. There is nothing that charms and interests the English more than strong individuality of character—the quality which has made themselves the architects of an Empire far more colossal and more powerful than that of Germany; and, therefore, there is no country visited by the Emperor where he was received with greater demonstrations of national respect than precisely in the country of his mother.

Where was any compliment ever offered the Emperor to compare with the grand naval review, on the occasion of his first visit to Osborne (August, 1889), when the Mistress of the Seas marshalled, under her very windows, over a hundred various ships of war, manned by three-and-twenty thousand men, to dip their respectful flags to her Majesty's German grandson? Or in what capital of Europe has the Kaiser ever been accorded a more sumptuous and impressive reception than was given him and his Consort, on the occasion of their State visit to London, in the summer of 1891 (just before the French demonstration at Cronstadt), with its Windsor festivities, its unparalleled performance at the Opera, its Guildhall banquet, and its Wimbledon review? Or where were our sailors ever received with more honour and applause

than when, soon after the Kaiser's first visit to Osborne (1889), the Channel Fleet went to Kiel, and must needs send all its principal officers to Berlin to be fêted and petted by the Emperor; who, in return for the rank of Admiral of the Fleet, conferred upon him by the Queen, had made her Majesty the chief of the Prussian 1st Dragoon Guards, which had made itself worthy of this distinction by its heroic valour on the field of Mars-la-Tour?

It was no wonder that when, next spring (1890), the Prince of Wales went to Berlin with his eldest son to return, on behalf of his mother, the Emperor's visit of the previous autumn, a German journal should have written: "The stepping-stones which formerly led across from Germany to England have been changed into a solid and stately bridge, ever since the sojourn of the Emperor on English soil last year." And what said the Kaiser himself, at a banquet in honour of his English kinsman?

"I thank your Royal Highness for having come on behalf of your royal mother and my grandmother to return the visit I paid last year to your country. I remember with great pleasure the days I spent there, and I am proud of having become, by the Queen's grace, a member of that admirable navy which has founded Great Britain's power and glory. I am not less proud of welcoming in your Highness the Colonel of the Blucher Hussar Regiment, which bears the name of the man under whom British and German blood was sacrificed against a common foe. I firmly hope that the friendship of both our countries will continue in the future, and that also in future the British Fleet and the German Army will stand together for the benefit of European peace."

One of the "stepping-stones" above alluded to had been the island of Heligoland; and soon after this (July, 1890) it was converted into one of the pillars of that "solid and stately bridge" of friendship, which was now declared by the German Press to unite the two nations. By the Anglo-German agreement with regard to East Africa, the island of Heligoland had been exchanged for the island of Zanzibar; and never hitherto had the Kaiser experienced a prouder moment—except, perhaps, when, in the previous autumn (1889) he inspected our Mediterranean Fleet at Athens—than when, on his way home from Cowes, in 1890, he stepped ashore and unfurled his flag on the craggy islet at the mouth of the Elbe. He had become "*Mehrer des Reichs*"—"Auctor Imperii"—"Magnifier of the Empire"—in the most literal sense of the term; and though he was accused by many of the "nagglers" (Bismarck included) of having only justified his claim to this ancient title of the German Emperors at a price out of all relative proportion to the value of the North Sea Rock, his Majesty was content to wait until the opening of the Elbe-Kiel Canal should bring home to the minds of all his grumbling subjects the strategical importance of this naval station dominating the new sea-line of communication between Kiel and Wilhelmshaven.

In exchanging Zanzibar for Heligoland, the Emperor, in fact, had looked very far ahead. But, apart from the merely commercial aspect of the transaction, had that same fallen Bismarck, who was now loudest in his condemnation of the bargain—had he not, before leaving office, written to the German Ambassador in London

to the effect that the friendship of England must be secured at almost any cost? * And yet four years were not to elapse before the ill-fated Congo Treaty between Belgium and England (12th May, 1894)—which very considerably modified the Anglo-German agreement of July, 1890, to the detriment of German interests—showed that there was a limit to the sacrifices which the Imperial Government was willing to make in order to secure the continuance of its cordial amity with that of England.

The energetic and successful protest which the Imperial Government hastened to lodge, both at Brussels and London, against the ill-considered Congo Treaty—a masterpiece of mole-eyed fatuity—was all the more indicative of striking force of character on the part of the Emperor, as it was his Majesty's first act of policy towards England in his recently acquired capacity as Colonel of the "Royals." This was a proof that the Emperor looked upon personal compliments as having nothing whatever to do with politics—or as, at least, belonging less to the category of cause than of effect. And yet these personal compliments were not always confined to an interchange of courtesies between the Courts of St. James and Berlin. Sometimes they were paid by the Emperor to the English nation itself, as when, for example, he conveyed his sincere condolence to the Army on the death of Lord Napier of Magdala, and telegraphed from Kiel to the widow of Admiral Tryon, who went down with the *Victoria*: "We grieve for him as if he had been one of ourselves."

Not that, apart from the Congo Treaty, Germany has

* See p. 161, *ante*.

not had her differences with England during the reign of William II. These differences have applied to Samoa, to the Hinterland of Togo, to South-west Africa, to Witu, and other fields of colonial enterprise, where the interests of the two Powers seemed to clash. It was, indeed, impossible for Germany to embark on over-sea adventure without coming now and then into sharp collision with the greatest colonial Power in the world. Such antagonism is not only natural, but inevitable, with rival traders, though it has never been so acute during the reign of the present Emperor as to justify those outbursts of irritation against England which sometimes bewilder students of the German Press. The truth is that on these occasions the German Press, knowing only half the facts, and these imperfectly, does not reflect the mind of the Emperor or his Government; and indeed its articles are nothing but what Bismarck once contemptuously characterised as so much mere *Druckerschwärze*—printer's ink, *et præterea nihil*.

But the most curious thing about these recrudescent fits of Anglophobia at Berlin is that they show a strange tendency to synchronize with the Emperor's annual visit to Cowes. At the beginning of his reign, many of his subjects—especially among the narrow-minded Junker class—exulted in the erroneous assumption that he was strongly Anglophobe; and now the grievance of these “nagglers” is that his Majesty is far too much of an Anglophile. They complain that the Emperor, on the whole, shows a tendency to give himself away to the English, or at least to cultivate their friendship in a manner so persistent and ostentatious as to cause un-

necessary irritation to Russia, and thus incline her to listen ever more to the blandishments of France. That at any rate the Emperor prizes and covets the friendship of England above that of any country outside the area of the Triple Alliance, is beyond all doubt; and to his *personal* predilections in this respect, apart from the political necessities of England herself, his Majesty gave ardent expression on the quarter-deck of the *Royal Sovereign*, on the occasion of the opening of the Kiel Canal. Replying to the toast of his health, the Emperor said:

"When the news was received that her Majesty the Queen had consented to send the Channel Squadron to the opening of the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal, I communicated the despatches by telegraph to my officers, and they were received with rounds of hearty cheers. I can only say that the appearance of the Channel Squadron in these waters has done much to enhance the lustre of the *fêtes*. Since our Navy has begun to exist, we have always tried to form our ideas and to learn from you. The history of the English Navy is as well known to our officers and midshipmen as it is to yours.

"You alluded to my rank as Admiral of the Fleet. I can only assure you that one of the finest days of my life, and one which I shall remember as long as I live, was the day when I inspected the Mediterranean Fleet at Athens, and went on board the *Dreadnought*, and my flag as Admiral of the Fleet was hoisted for the first time. It is quite unprecedented that in Kiel waters the standard of the German Emperor should fly side by side with the flag of a British Admiral of the Fleet on board a man-of-war, with Admiral Alington as my flag-captain, I being not only the Admiral, but also the grandson, of the mighty English Queen."

My task is now done, for the present. The life of a living Monarch, especially of one who has only swayed

his sceptre for seven years, must necessarily be a torso ; and this imposes upon the artist of such a fragment the necessity of being more than careful in the execution of his work. On no man or Monarch can a positive opinion be passed until he shall have joined the majority ; and happily, to all appearance, William II. has still a long and glorious life before him.

It is for this reason that I have preferred the descriptive to the critical method in the construction of my biographical sketch, as deeming that the character of a contemporary Sovereign can best be painted in the carefully mixed colours of his own words and acts. But it will probably be owned, after perusal of the foregoing fragment, that William II.—to say nothing more—has already proved himself to be one of the most remarkable men of his time, and given ample promise of a future which will be followed with the very keenest interest by all the English-speaking race.

PLYMOUTH :
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